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Honoring Transitions: An Examination of Junior and Senior Honors Student Engagement

by

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ABSTRACT

This action research study took a mixed methods approach to examine junior and senior student engagement at the honors college in the downtown campus of Arizona State University. The purpose of the study was to better understand the lack of engagement with junior and senior students within the college. The study sought to examine the usage of year specific programs and the possibility of influence on the target populations' engagement. In addition, the study focused on understanding the usage of such programs and its ability to influence student perception of coping with transitions. The growth of honors education and the value of student engagement lead the study. Life Hacks is a series of programs designed to engage the target population by addressing an anticipated transition. This study focused on exploring junior and senior honors student engagement and the utilization of programs to address the student's ability to cope with transitions. The program was divided into six workshops that spanned the semester and were taught by college partners who were deemed a resource on the subject matter. Two surveys were deployed: one at the beginning of the semester and the other at the end of the semester. Participants were selected based on their academic status as a junior or senior within the honors college on campus and their age rage. All participants traditionally matriculated from high school and were between the ages of 18-25. Two focus groups, with a total of eight participants (4 juniors and 4 seniors), were conducted at the end of the semester to gather qualitative data. Findings indicated that participants allowed their emotions to influence their ability to cope with transitions. Relationships with peers and staff were important to decision making processes and network building

for junior and senior participants. Students within the study set expectations for the college and themselves that influence how they relate to college and their relation to adulthood. The implications of practice that resulted from the study involved improving student access to information and assisting students with understanding the need for the resource and how to apply it to their current and future challenges.

DEDICATION

To my God: Thank you for ordering my steps and providing grace and mercy when needed.

To myself: It was hard but I took a chance on you. It is okay to be proud of yourself.

To my husband: I apologize for the dishes, late nights, and microwaved meals. #teamAZGatewoods #weallwegot

To Carter and Parker: Mommy loves you. Look at me and see greatness but know you will be greater. You are my great expectations.

To my Parents: Thank you for your love and support. Dad, thank you for the pep talks. Gigi and Pop-Pop, thank you for helping my husband manage the minions.

To My Sister Circle: Your prayers and support during this time has often been the bright light that I needed to guide my way out of a dark tunnel.

To My Students (Past and Present): Without your input and openness, this study would not exist. I promise to keep advocating, supporting, and cheering you on to greater heights.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions (honors education included) are focused on the development of signature experiences for their students; however, these experiences are typically centered in the first-year experience and the transfer student experience (Mintz, 2017). Signature experiences are those events and activities that are targeted toward a specific audience, in this study, honors students. First-year experiences are centered on the development of carefully orchestrated and energized events and programs that help students, who are new to the institutions, to find a connection to the university and academic program. These connections are designed with the hope that they promote retention and increase graduation rates. Many cases, the connection can endure beyond graduation and promote alumni involvement. In the most optimal case, the student has developed a strong affinity toward the institution due to their positive experience and is willing to provide resources to the institution in the form of monetary gifts, mentoring, or job opportunities. While building connections are important for students entering college, this study explores how connections might be sustained through programming for junior and senior honors students.

For a century, honors programs and colleges have been a place of promise, examination, and more recently growth. Honors education exists in many forms—from departmental programs that are a part of a singular academic unit to free standing colleges with honors residential facilities. Honors education is returning to the higher educational spotlight as more colleges and universities are adding or expanding the

honors footprint on their campuses across the nation (Bruni, 2015). In an age where technology is widely utilized, a focus on innovation is key. Christensen and Eyring (2011) conducted research on the subjection of innovation in higher education arguing that online education has disrupted the traditional process of the educational system. They continued to argue the need for universities and colleges to master online education and make other innovations. This study focuses on the later, finding creative ways to innovate education, namely honors education. Their research centered on finding ways to improve access to education and information. It spoke to innovating education by addressing the current needs but providing access to the masses. This concept is applied to the idea of public honors colleges in areas that were historically dominated by private institutions. Where online education became a disruptor to higher education institutions, honors education at public institutions have become the newest disruptor.

The D.N.A. of higher education stems from that of the Ivy League institutions (Christensen & Eyring, 2011). The genetics of honors education can be argued to be from many sources; however, the current iteration of honors education can be attributed to the focus on access and inclusion, mainly from public universities finding ways to provide high quality education to a broader population that includes those that may have been historically underrepresented (Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Crow & Dabars, 2015). Today's version of honors education is an adaptation of early German and English educational systems (Rinn, 2006). The introduction of the Rhodes scholarships in 1899 brought the opportunity for scholars around the world to Oxford University to study, including scholars from the United States. Upon the scholars return to the U.S., they

began to institute the instructional methods such as Socratic style teachings and differentiated instruction. Early American attempts at honors education can be linked to Harvard University, the University of Michigan, Princeton University, and Columbia University (Rinn, 2006).

In this study I used action research to examine the concept of the honors experience by broadening the populations previously studied within honors research. As previously mentioned, first-year student research is abundant within higher education. This study focused on junior and senior honors students as a group of transitioning emerging adults. This expands the research on honors colleges by designating the subjects by academic year rather than honors designation. This chapter outlines the growth in honors education and discusses the setting of this study. I examine the low engagement of juniors and seniors within the honors college as my problem of practice (a challenge within my professional sphere of influence). This study sought to explore how the creation of year-specific programming impacted students' desire to engage with the honors college and if that programming would influence students' perceptions of their preparedness for transition to graduation.

National Context

In 2015, the New York Times published an article about the rising development and expansion of honors programs at public institutions. Some highly sought-after high school academic achievers are choosing public university honors programs over the top Ivy League institutions due to the benefits of a smaller price tag, location, available aid, and dedicated resources (Bruni, 2015). The honors college is much like a small private

education nestled within the largest public research university in the nation. In a 2016 study, Scott and Smith looked at higher education institutions across the nation and found that of the 2,550 colleges and universities, 59% offer a form of honors education (college or program). Of that subset, 68% (1,114) are four-year institutions (private and public). The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) has seen a six-fold increase in membership in slightly over twenty years (Scott & Smith, 2016). These figures suggest that the access to honors education is increasing across the nation through the growth of honors' colleges and programs. Honors education has seen widespread growth in the public sector in the past decade (Bruni, 2015; Scott & Smith, 2016). Public honors colleges offer the lure of privatized education and the social capital of a big state school (Bruni, 2015). It is a two-for-one type deal. As honors colleges and programs are growing, there is a need for more research on honors students. Currently there is a lack of research in honors education (Achterberg, 2005). The current gap may be the result of research that subsumes honors students in the general population of the university. The factor of an honors program or designation is not typically included in the demographics of engagement research. While honors students may be included in the broader context of engagement, their unique environment and characteristics warrant a closer look.

State Context

The state of Arizona has three publicly funded institutions that house and honors college: Northern Arizona University (NAU), University of Arizona (UofA), and Arizona State University (ASU). All three are governed by the Arizona Board of Regents. NAU is located in Flagstaff, Arizona. It is a public research institution that enrolled

approximately 31,000 students both online and in person for the year of 2018 (Facts and Stats, 2019). The NAU honors college is the eldest state wide honors education, however it began as a program and recently was established as a college. Due to an enrollment increase, NAU Honors College has constructed a new building in 2018 that houses bedrooms, classrooms, and student advising center and study areas (Sargent, 2018). In the fall of 2018, NAU Honors College saw an enrollment of 550 students. In addition, the 2018 total student enrollment in the honors college was 1,325 students (Schonbrun, 2018). The fee for the honors program is $350 a semester. All three institutions have a fee based program.

Further down state in Tuscon, Arizona is U of A. The university is a research one institution housing approximately 5,500 honors students (Our Students, 2019). 1962, the university established an interdisciplinary honors program. In 1999, the honors programs obtained college status. In 2011, a new residence hall was established to house honors students (mission and history, 2019). At a glance, U of A hosts approximately 35,000 undergraduate students. The fee for the UofA Honors College is $250 per each semester. Each of the state institutions offer a fee based Honors College with residential housing options.

As the nation's largest public university, Arizona State University provides great opportunities for interdisciplinary interactions for honors students. Both the University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University have residential honors programs. The focus of this section remains within ASU due to the size and caliber of the honors program and its ranking as number one in the nation. ASU is a large “research 1” public

university within the PAC-12 conference in the United States. Barrett, the Honors College (BHC) was previously the "Honors College" established in 1988. In response to a 10-million-dollar endowment in 2000, it was renamed after Craig and Barbara Barrett (Hermann, 2011). The founding Dean of the college, Ted Humphries, made the residential learning community a key component of the honors experience. As the college grew, the largest developer of residential communities was chosen to partner with the university to develop and manage ASU property. This project became the 140 million-dollar, four-year, residential honors college bearing the name Barrett (Hermann, 2011; Jacobs, 2015).

Honors students have a dedicated space on the each of the campuses. The Tempe campus complex is a multi-million dollar complex housing residential facilities, classroom, administration offices, computer lab, dining hall, gathering space and more. Honors students also have residential representation on three additional campuses (Polytechnic, West, and Downtown) where they have the potential to make meaningful academic and personal connections.

Local Context: ASU Downtown Campus

As the first four-year public residential honors college in the state and nation, ASU has laid the foundation for honors education by pushing the experience to exist beyond the classroom (Jacobs, 2015). The residential experience is one example of the college's ability to bring a deeper and more meaningful out of the classroom experience to the student.

Honors colleges such as BHC at ASU are a strong example of learning communities. Zhao and Kuh (2004) conducted a national survey of student engagement (NSSE) and argued about the impact of learning communities on student persistence. Their findings support the argument that participation in learning communities, such as residential colleges, is positively related to student success. Most relevant, Zhao and Kuh (2004) found that their data indicated the positive effect is greatest within the first year but it can span all four years of college. With the positive effect of participation spanning past the first year, educators should focus on the momentum of engagement past the first year and into the junior and senior years. Lenning and Ebbers (1999) described learning communities as environments where a target population shares a common academic and social learning experience, which can be residential. BHC is considered a living and learning environment because of its unique residential experience and the signature academic experiences shared by all honors students. A component of the BHC signature experience is the ability for honors students to share in common programs and opportunities afforded by the Student Services department. This department provides programs designated for BHC students in addition to those offered by the university.

BHC is unique for its residential experience, signature courses, and full-time staff devoted to assisting its students (Hermann, 2011; Signature Courses, n.d.). The leadership structure within BHC consists of a Vice-Provost/Dean at the largest campus (Tempe) serving along with a Vice-Dean, Associate Dean of Students, and Assistant Dean of Students. Each campus has an Associate Dean dedicated to the daily functions of their respective campus.

The BHC Student Services department is comprised of the following units: Advising, Student Engagement, and Residential Life. BHC prides itself in signature courses such as the "Human Event", a Socratic style seminar, for freshman and the newly established "History of Ideas" course for upper division transfer students (Hermann, 2011; Signature Courses, n.d.). These courses were designed to engage students in critical discourse and challenge students to develop their argumentative writing skills. The courses are taught by an exclusive group of honors faculty members specific to BHC. Honors students are supported by an honors advisor who is assigned to each incoming student as an additional avenue of academic support (Hermann, 2011; Signature Courses, n.d.).

The residential context is essential to the honors signature experience as BHC has established a partnership with ASU Residential Life in hiring and training Community Assistants and Community Directors specific to the honors college (Hermann, 2011; Residential College Experience, n.d.). These individuals are live-in staff members who have the task of creating the ideal collegiate residential experience through providing direct support to honors students. This provides additional opportunities to engage students outside of the classroom. In addition it reinforces the sense of engagement that is encouraged within the college.

Student Engagement

Student engagement opportunities at BHC are distinct to the college. BHC at each campus creates their own programming that speaks to the population of its campus accompanied by general all campus honors programs. Students have the focus of full-

time staff members—the student engagement team—who work to design and implement programs, provide outreach opportunities, and develop initiatives based on student need through co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Travel opportunities, honors-specific student organizations, and service programs are a few of the avenues for students to further engage in the honors community (Student Life, n.d.). Each BHC student is assessed a $750 fee per semester that helps fund these unique opportunities, programs, and events. One opportunity available to students is the usage of a thesis project fund. This fund offers approximately $1400 towards their thesis project to include, for example, travel for an out of state expert to participate on their committee, supplies for research, or technology such as a computer or software purchase. The honors thesis is the capstone of the honors program and can be an empirical research project or a creative project such as a research-informed film script or dance performance. There are scholarships and conference funding available to students (Thesis and Project Funding, n.d.). These resources operate independently of those available to students from the university or their academic major college.

I use the term *student engagement* in this study to describe the attendance, participation, and satisfaction of students who attend honors specific programming and events. Buckner et al. (2016) conducted a study looking at honors student engagement compared to non-honors students. In this study, the year of the students were not reported. The study found that students with high achieving orientations tend to seek out engagement opportunities that develop affective and cognitive areas. This suggests that honors students will seek out engagement opportunities. This also indicates that the

honors college needs to offer opportunities that allow them to engage and develop. Astin (1999) postulated that an increase in student involvement is a predictor of academic success and retention. The theoretical frameworks of engagement are further discussed in Chapter Two.

As colleges continue to innovate and explore alternate streams of revenue due to decreased financial support from federal and local government (Christensen and Eyring, 2011), honors colleges may become a new source of income/revenue for institutions (Hermann, 2011). Students will need to see the benefit of increased academic rigor and the exploration that comes with an honors distinction. Student engagement through events and programs will be an important factor in retaining students to successful completion and adding value to their honors experience. In doing so, this may add to a student's sense of belonging, building their identity, and contribute to building connections with the university, college and program.

Positionality

Dean Humphries was succeeded by Marc Jacobs who initially focused on expanding the college model to the additional three campuses. The first expansion was to the downtown Phoenix campus (DPC) in 2008. The DPC is located in the heart of Phoenix and was established in 2006. The campus is primarily comprised of professional majors. The largest college at the time of writing was the Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions. The College of Community Health Solutions, College of Nursing and Health Innovations, and Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communications also have large populations of undergraduates on the campus.

The BHC staff at DPC is comprised of an Associate Dean, a Recruitment and Admissions Manager, two Honors Advisors, Student Services Program Coordinator, Sr., and a Program Coordinator. The BHC Suite is a dedicated space to house faculty and staff. The unique space provides a private computer lab for students with free printing, walk-in advising and weekly events and activities to serve the approximate 700 downtown honors students. Designated staff, space, and support highlight the offerings of public honors colleges and programs that were traditionally offered at privatized and Ivy League institutions. These additional resources add to the appeal of public honors education.

I began this position in May 2017 as an administrative move from the Tempe campus to DPC. I, along with the Associate Dean and the Recruitment and Admissions Manager, the academic advisor and program coordinator, have been in our positions for less than two years. The students in the target population of this study experienced several turnovers in staff, possibly making it difficult to engage or build connections. In addition, this could have an effect on the campus culture for engagement.

As the Program Manager, I report directly to the Associate Dean of the DPC. I serve as the downtown representative to the BHC Student Services team that promotes student engagement through events and opportunities on all four campuses are under the governance of the Associate Dean of Students, who is located at the Tempe campus. I am responsible for the development and execution of the DPC-specific honors experience. My role includes supervising the residential student leaders, meeting with students who are seeking to engage with the college, directing the student engagement

department, to assist students with academic, financial and personal challenges in connecting them to resources available in the college or University. I have one professional staff member and four student staff members who work to plan and carry out events and programs. I am responsible for providing the direction and leadership in developing programmatic areas that support the unique pre-professional honors students at DPC.

The direction for our department is shaped by the goals and objectives of the University, the campus, and BHC. The department anchors its decisions based on student feedback and input. The students provide input through a survey administered at the end of the semester. Students also have the opportunity to provide informal feedback throughout the year by making an appointment to pitch new program ideas or express concerns. In addition, I meet with an elected representative of the student body government to hear honors community trends and updates. This illustrates how students have a stake in developing and shaping their engagement opportunities. Many of these are newly formed opportunities and may impact their desire to engage with the honors college.

Problem of Practice

In the initial BHC DPC programming audit I conducted for the 2016 academic year, I found an average of 10 honors extracurricular programs were offered a year. I examined the program calendars, student staff records, attendance sheets and marketing materials of the last two academic years. I was looking to understand the ways and

number of engagement opportunities available to students. This data revealed that a large number of events were marketed towards first and second year students.

At the time, the only student feedback on the honors experience available to examine was the BHC Senior Survey. This survey was administered by the advising office to graduating seniors with the purpose of gathering employment data and overall satisfaction with the honors experience, provided information that informed our 2017 student engagement academic year goals. The questions on the survey that inquired about areas of improvement that I categorized as: community, engagement, academic, and administrative. The data collected showed the need for more social/academic opportunities for students.

The goal I identified for the department for the 2017 academic year was to increase the number of opportunities for students to engage, and connect with BHC. We provided satisfaction-based surveys after every event and provide time for event debriefs to discuss exemplars and challenges with student leaders. In examining this data, I have noted there are voices missing. While we have increased the number of programs and events, the majority of students attending these programs are first and second year students. These students are classified as lower division students within BHC. The missing voices belong to the upper division students identified as juniors and seniors. Based on attendance records for all of 2016 and fall of 2017, less than one percent of upper division students engaged in BHC sponsored events and programs. This could be based on the limited number of events; the inconsistencies with staffing; or they type of

programming offered. The engagement research previously mentioned signaled to high achieving students ability to seek out engagement opportunities.

My problem of practice focuses on the low engagement of juniors and seniors within the honors college at the DPC. Representing 9% of the BHC total population are the DPC honors students. It is the second largest campus population of BHC students. The honors college at DPC has continued a growth trend into the 2018 academic year. However, from fall 2014 to spring 2018 DPC BHC lost 152 juniors and seniors because of their desire to withdraw from the program. Of the 152 students who withdrew, 47 had transferred to DPC from another campus (E. Hsu, personal communication, October 6, 2018). As a field and as a college, we have worked hard to develop the honors first-year experience with the goal of retention to graduation. When a student transitions to a new campus, especially as a junior or senior, it can feel like starting over. Each campus has a character that is unique to its environment and surrounding community.

Students who transfer must learn to navigate a new campus while grappling with the task of learning a new academic college (Young and Litzler, 2013). If the student transfers and fails to develop a connection to the local honors college, they could be more susceptible to withdrawal and thus not graduate with honors distinction. This is significant to the field of higher education due to the rise of honors colleges. While each college may not have several campuses, it may allow for entrance later than the first year. If colleges begin to broaden the scope of engagement, then students who enter later than the traditional freshman year or transfer into the program will have the opportunities to

make meaningful connections that will support them for successful completion of honors programs and colleges.

In addition, the value of an honors education must expand beyond the first-year experience if we wish to retain students. This action research study seeks to examine the honors student engagement through the development of a signature programmatic experience for junior and senior students, thus expanding the scope of honors education literature and shedding light on year-specific experiences of honors students.

The 2017 BHC graduation survey review revealed that the students requested a more cohesive experience with more consistent opportunities for seniors to engage with the college through programs. As previously stated, there is a gap in the engagement research on junior and senior honors students. Most research revolves around the first-year experience. This study addresses the gap in understanding junior and senior engagement as well as add to the literature regarding honors students and transitions. The research questions driving this study are:

1. How might creating a year-specific programming model for junior and senior honors students impact their desire to become engaged in honors college programming?
2. How does students' involvement in the honors college programming impact their perception of their preparedness to cope with the anticipated transition of graduation?

Innovation

To address the low involvement of upper division students, I created an innovation based on year-specific programming tracks for juniors and seniors. Currently, at the beginning of each year, first-year students receive a "101 Things to do Before You Graduate" poster. This poster gives a bird's eye view of engagement—a big picture of opportunities to help students understand the plethora of opportunities to enrich their academic experience. My innovation was inspired by the poster. I wondered if students thought about specific skills they needed to gain before graduation. The purpose of the innovation (describe in detail in Chapter 3) was to create a program that provides the opportunity for students, specifically juniors and seniors, to develop the skills they think they need to successfully transition from student to graduate. By creating a path that introduces junior and senior year students to the basic concepts of skills and resources used by adults to navigate day to day and professional challenges, I hypothesized that students will become more engaged with the college and identify the workshops as an additional value to their honors education.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

In this chapter I provide insight into the theoretical foundations of student involvement. I use *student engagement* in this study as a reference to *student involvement*. I use these terms interchangeably as one (involvement) refers to the theory and the other (engagement) is the term used my field and the honors college. Based on the literature presented, the current research is extremely limited in the area of honors student involvement at the junior and senior level. The gap I seek to address is adding to the body of research on junior and senior students in an honors setting. While referring to traditional freshman students, I utilize the term first-year students. However, the usage of junior and senior for traditional third and fourth year students is utilized to highlight their status in reference to proximity to graduation. This study focuses on the honors student population and many come to the college with additional credits that allow them to graduate early. The usage of junior and senior is inclusive for those students who are graduating earlier than their traditional time frame. First, I examine student involvement theory to lay the foundation for the problem of practice: the lack of engagement of junior and senior honors students. Second, I examine *transition theory*. Within the chapter, I focused on understanding the elements of transitions in relation to the junior and senior collegiate experience—in particular, the transition from college student to college graduate.

While this study is about the graduation transition, it does not focus on job readiness or preparation. This study's focus is aimed at exploring junior and senior

honors student engagement through programming that addresses students' ability to cope with transitions, such as a campus change, graduation or employment gain/loss. The literature found on transition, including the theory itself, generally speaks to adulthood transition. This study shifts the focus from adulthood to emerging adulthood. I define emerging adulthood as students who are 18-25 years old and are traditionally matriculating through the college. Finally, I used this framework to influence my innovation as it framed my targeted population and the perceived lens juniors and seniors use to view the innovation. The emerging adulthood literature highlights three important factors that provide comfort and security in a student's transition from emerging adulthood to adulthood. This study examines the utilization of the transitional coping skills using the emerging adulthood framework to identify "topics" within the innovation that are of importance to this developmental stage.

Student Involvement Theory

Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement is a mainstay in student development research used in higher education. Student involvement theory leans on the premise that students are positively impacted by being involved on campus. Students who are not involved, based on the theory, are more likely to have trouble being retained by the institution. The basic foundation of student involvement theory is reflected in the plethora of research that couples student involvement theory and student retention theories (Tinto, 2015). Astin (1985) referred to involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 36). This theory focuses on the actual behavior and not the motivation behind the behavior.

Astin (1999) highlighted involvement with active behavior terms such as "take part in" and "engage in" (p. 519). Astin does not dismiss the role of motivation, but rather emphasized action as a way to define and identify involvement.

Assumptions

The first assumption in student involvement theory is that involvement is the key to learning (Astin 1984; 1985; 1999). Involvement is about the investment of energy (psychological and physical) a student puts into an object. This theory allows for generalization with a narrowed focus. An example of a generalized object is the honors college experience. Through the lens of the theory, I sought to examine the ways in which juniors and seniors devote physical and psychological energy into their interactions within the college.

The second postulate is that involvement exists on a continuum (Astin, 1999). There is subjectivity to involvement by the individual participating in the process. Particularly, students are involved in activities to different degrees; in addition, they may be involved with various things, at different times and to various degrees. This speaks to the situational web of life for students. Honors students have the challenge of being involved within their major college (for example, College of Nursing and Health Innovation) and the honors college. These students receive multiple requests for attendance at programs and events from both colleges. In addition to completing their course work for their degree, they are working to complete their thesis in order to receive the honors designation on their transcript. In relation to this study, the competing demands of involvement could correlate to the level of a student's involvement.

The third assumption is that involvement has both qualitative and quantitative measurable features (Astin, 1999). This assumption speaks to my mixed methods study design. Astin's theory focused on the process in which development occurs, typically studied in a quantitative manner, but the focus on a student's action and behavior could be explored in qualitative research.

The fourth assumption is that the amount of learning and personal development from education programs are related to the quality and quantity of the student's involvement. The innovation for this study requires students to invest time and cognitive energy in the programs and events.

The final assumption deals with the measurement of effectiveness of policies and practices in higher education. Astin (1999) stated the measurement of the practices should be directly related to their capacity to increase student involvement. For my study, I focused on students' relationship to involvement rather than faculty influence on student involvement. Astin (1999) focused on the influence of faculty and in classroom interactions that influence student engagement.

Related Studies

Astin's theory is commonly cited within the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Cooperative Institutional Research Project (CIRP) (Burch, Heller, Burch, Freed & Steed, 2015; Evans et al., 2010; Sharkness & De Angelo, 2011). Burch et al. (2015) used Astin's (1999) student involvement theory coupled with Khan's (1990) employee engagement management theory. The purpose of Burch's two-part study was to examine student engagement to develop and psychometrically test a student

engagement survey. The researchers explored the problem of business faculty who were challenged in finding ways to measure engagement of students to show continued improvements while focusing on student engagement. The first study developed a scale to measure the four proposed factors of student engagement. The survey participants came from a mid-sized southern university. The total number of participants were 214 undergraduates with 53% women and 27.6% identified as minorities.

Each participant self-reported their level of student engagement. Study 1 supported the researchers' theory of student engagement being comprised of four factors: emotional engagement, physical engagement, cognitive engagement in the classroom, and cognitive engagement outside the classroom. Study 2 focused on the confirmation of the four components of student engagement from the pilot study. This study concluded that student engagement has dimensions rather than being a single dimension construct. The Burch et al. (2015) study showed that the usage of both factorial theory and developmental theory can provide a rich scope to investigate student engagement. The factorial theory provides the quantitative data and the developmental theory allows for the richer explanation

Student involvement theory seeks to speak to the previous gaps in theories which Astin (1999) categorized as "hierarchically developed" or "multidimensional" student development theory. In these theories the focus is on the developmental outcome, whereas student involvement theory singles out *how* the development occurs. The five assumptions in student involvement theory, as stated above, are the factors to which

student development can occur. In Astin's (1999) implications for future research, he argued that development and process oriented theories could work together in research.

Transition Theory

Higher education transition research has generally focused on the transition from high school to college. This focus has led to an influx of research on what has become the *first- year experience* phenomenon (Gardner & Van, 1998). Recent usage of transition theory has focused on community college students and their transition to four-year institutions. Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory is derived from her personal journey and relationship with change. During her transition into a new role, she experienced confusion and angst. She developed her theory to provide a structure to study adult transition with the ability to be adapted to any transition. Transition theory is considered an adult development theory. While junior and senior students fall under the spectrum of emerging adults, they are still adults and are susceptible to transitional challenges that are accompanied by the flux and constant change of adulthood and the anticipated transition, graduation. Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012) argued the adjustment to discontinuity is the new normal and continuity is the exception. There are three major types of transitions: anticipated, unanticipated, and non-event.

Anticipated transitions are foreseen (Schlossberg, 2011). An individual expects an event to occur and takes a role in its progress. Graduation is an expected transition. Students are aware of graduation once they begin their college career. It generally serves as a long-term goal in a series of objectives that accompanies the beginning a college career. Unanticipated transitions are those that occur unexpectedly and are often

disruptive to the normalcy of day to day interactions. Within the context of my study this could be the death of a parent or loved one, illness, car accident, or learning of early graduation qualification. Anticipated events that fail to occur represent non-event transitions. A nursing student who fails the standardized licensing exam would be considered in a non-event transition. The goal of attending nursing school is to study and prepare to become a nurse. If that does not occur in the anticipated timeline, the student may experience angst and confusion due to the disruption in their life plan. Transitions disrupt, change, or influence roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions (Schlossberg, 2011; Anderson, et al., 2012).

Transition Model

The transition model has three major parts: approaching transition, the transition process, and the resolution (Anderson et al., 2012). Due to the influence of event or non-event transitions on a student's relationships, roles, or routines, the result can be upsetting—even to desired transitions. However, opportunities of growth and challenge can spur from transitions (Bridge, 1980; Schlossberg, 2011; Anderson, et al., 2012). Anderson et al. (2012), stated the importance of the individual's perspective and their view of the change. They conclude that a transition is contingent on the individual viewing the change as an actual transition. Approaching a transition requires one to understand the classification of the transition. While graduation will impact students individually and their responses will vary in degrees, for this study, I consider graduation an anticipated transition.

There are three factors to consider when approaching a transition: perspective, context, and impact (Anderson et al., 2012). Perspective on transition will change with each student. This factor deals with how the individual perceives the anticipated change: in this case graduation. An individual's appraisal of the change influences the impact of the occurring change. For example, a junior may feel the pressures of graduation as much as senior who is graduating within the month. The junior may appraise their academic performance with increased scrutiny and concern if they do not feel their current reality is reflective of their ideal situation. An example of an ideal situation could be to support their graduation goals, getting into graduate school or obtaining employment. In other words, the junior may feel they are not in the place they should be or doing as well as they think they should be performing to set themselves up for a successful graduation transition.

Context acts like a lens to change. A student's socioeconomic status, gender, or race can play a factor in how the change is magnified or minimized by their perspective. Seniors who have the financial resources to support themselves may feel the impact of graduation differently than students who live paycheck to paycheck with no additional financial resources or support. The change will impact both groups of students, but the degree to which the impact affects the students is contingent on context (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012).

Impact is the largest factor in transition and plays an important role. Impact represents the change that occurs to the individual's role, responsibilities, relationships, etc. The change will alter their daily life. Students' day to day activities are impacted by

their role as a student. They negotiate and prioritize based on this role. Upon graduation students need to re-prioritize and negotiate a new role as a postgraduate.

The transitional factors of perspective, context and impact play a vital role in orchestrating the student's relationship to the change in becoming a graduate. Transition theory has three major assumptions (Anderson et al., 2012). The first, is that adults continuously experience transition. The second, is that the factors discussed above (perspective, context, and impact) are influencers on the individual's reaction to the transition. The final assumption is that there is no endpoint to a transition; there is a point in which the effects of the transitions are on a continuum, and therefore no real end occurs. Instead, a person experiences phases of assimilation and constant reappraisal. No end point to a transition is reflective in the common phrase of "lifelong learning". This phrase insinuates that one Sis never done being a student. Students' context (graduation) and impact are re-appraised and their perspective changes as time goes by post-graduation. Transitions can be supported through the 4s System for coping.

The 4s System for Coping

Transition theory is accompanied by a system to assist with positive interactions with transition (Schlossberg, 2011; Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012). This system assisted with the development of the innovation for this study. The system represents areas that are common to those experiencing change and transition. *Situation* is the first sector and speaks to a person's situation at the time of the transition. A student may have outside factors producing stress such as having to search for living arrangements when they have lived with roommates or within the residential college,

such as the honors college. The second sector is *self*. A person's capacity and ability to cope with the situation represents this sector. Attitude and optimism influence a person's ability to deal with the ambiguity a change can bring. Students experience a certain level of ambiguity when they depart from the normalcy that was college.

Support is the third sector of the coping system. This sector refers to the resources available to one during their transition. If a student is beginning to explore the post-graduate job search, the resources in helping to develop a cover letter and interviewing skills will be important to their ability to cope with their role as the job searcher. The final sector of the 4s system is *strategies*. The final sector represents the knowing and understanding of reframing, brainstorming and use of stress reduction strategies to assist with the navigation of the transition. For example, a strategy could be breathing techniques to calm a student who may feel the anxiety resulting for the anticipated change of graduation.

The 4s system is a partner to transition theory and I used it for the development of the programs for the innovation. I identified the separate programming tracks (junior and senior) to focus the study on the four sectors that influence coping with transition such as graduation. The goal is to increase the junior and senior honors student engagement by offering programs that build skills that are of value to emerging adults.

Relevant Study

Cox, Reason, Nix, and Gillman (2016) conducted a longitudinal study of the impact of life events that likely cause psychological distress on students. The purpose of the study was to understand the impact of events that likely cause psychological anguish

for students. This study engaged logistic regression using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshman to identify the effects of non-college life-events on the likelihood of graduation. The researchers ran descriptive statistics to find the frequency of the life events measured in the study. Cox et al. (2016) found psychological consequences such as anxiety, had a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of graduation. In addition, the study's finding indicated that psychological non-college-life events, such as the victimization of a friend or family member, are less frequently anticipated, less openly discussed, and more independent to the student. This study implies the need to assist students in developing coping skills to manage the transitions that occur when life events happen.

Emerging Adulthood

Junior and senior students within the honors college who have traditionally matriculated join the ranks of their peers as emerging adults. I utilize the theory of *emerging adulthood* to understand the development of people aged 18-25. Arnett and Tanner (2006) argued that these years are a distinct period in a life course. Different than adolescence, this specific age group, over the past half century, has shown unique changes in milestones. Fifty years ago, many emerging adults were focused with settling down into relationships with the goal of marriage and parenthood and finding consistency and longevity in work and residency. Through the changing times, innovation, and development, many emerging adults now experience this period with new foci. The time has become an opportunity for identity exploration, managing feelings of balancing in-

between adolescence and adulthood. This age culminates as the age of possibilities where individuals feel hopeful of their change outlook.

Relevant Studies

Juniors and seniors, based on emerging adulthood theory, can feel in-between adolescence and adulthood. Arnett (2011) conducted a study that examined American conceptions of adulthood between adolescence (ages 13-19), emerging adults (ages 20-29), and young to midlife (ages 30-55). The study took place in a Midwestern community where researchers asked individuals in public places (N = 519) to take a 15 minute survey about their conceptions of the transition to adulthood. One of the questions asked if participants felt they have reached adulthood. Half of the participants in the age group of emerging adults indicated the ambiguous response "in some ways yes and in some ways no" (Arnett, 2011, p. 142). The findings of the study indicated that emerging adults consider intangible items, such as accepting responsibilities for one's self, to be the most important indicator of the transition to adulthood. This study provides insight on the top three indicators emerging adults believe to be the most important during the transition to adulthood. The additional two indicators identified were making independent decisions and the ability to become financially independent. The topics for the innovation for my study were derived from these three indicators.

I postulated that juniors and seniors are emerging adults and could benefit from programming that supports a successful transition from student to graduate by addressing the top three indicators of adulthood: considering intangible items, independent decisions, and fiscal independence. For this study, a successful transition, is identified as a

student's positive perception of their ability to cope with graduation and challenges brought on by life. I examined the first stage of transition.

Previous Cycles of Research

In previous cycles of action research, prior to a change in my position, I conducted five 30 minute interviews with senior level administrators within BHC to discuss belongingness and community for underrepresented populations in the honors college. All participants were White female administrators. Three have doctoral degrees and two have a master's degree. Collectively there is over 80 years of experience spread across the five participants.

I audio recorded the semi-structured interviews where I asked a series of nine questions in the same order. Participants provided clarification and elaboration through loosely structured follow-up questions. The questions focused on participants' perceptions of the importance of belongingness as it related to students of color, low SES and first-generation honors students. Sample questions from the interviews:

1. *Briefly describe the college's role as it relates to building community for students of color, low SES (socioeconomic) status, and first generation students.*
2. *To what extent do you feel that Barrett intentionally promotes a sense of belonging with students of color, low SES (socioeconomic) status, and first generation students? Can you give a specific example?*

Based on the responses, three main themes emerged from the collected data. Constant comparative method was used to identify the themes of home, empowerment, and gaps in understanding and action. The gaps section is where I found the opportunity

to explore the college's understanding of students' needs. All five administrators identified a gap in the understanding of needs for some of the vulnerable populations. When accepting my current role as Senior Coordinator in Student Services for the DPC, I began to explore the same themes of belongingness and community for students of color, low income and first-generation students. However, what I found was that these students had begun to create communities within the honors community for survival and support. The DPC had experienced a high rate of administrative turnover and students expressed anxiety over the lack of continuity. The gap theme proved to be true in another area, junior and senior involvement in honors programs and events.

As I began to take root in my new position with the responsibility of meeting with students who are of concern or are having challenges I noticed a pattern in the thinking and circumstances. DPC students have found a foundational level of belongingness through their major. The bulk of majors on this campus are pre-professional (e.g., nursing, communications, social work); this means there is a common solidarity and understanding between the honors student within like majors. My previous campus (Tempe) is the largest and it proved difficult for students to forge connections as underrepresented populations were further isolated by the sheer volume of students. With a tenth of the largest campus honors population, DPC students see each other more often and live in one complex.

The majority of DPC honors students have some financial need ranging from moderate to very high based on their expected family contribution. Financial strain or concerns are often the main topic of my conversations with students. The second most

frequent topic is adjustment to transitions. This can range from fear of living alone after graduation to adjusting to life events such as the loss of a parent or friend. Mental health challenges top the third most frequent topic in my meetings with students. Many of the students are "self-referred" meaning they chose to see me under their own volition. In prior interactions with junior and senior students, I noticed that transitions impact their academics as well as their involvement with the college. I start every meeting with the question, "How is your honors experience this week?" I hear students in their senior year contemplating withdrawing from honors because they have a lot on their plate (personally and academically). In the majority of the cases, I am able to create a plan using campus and community resources for students to provide support to their challenges. However, I cannot meet within every upper division to create individual success plans. There are approximately 250 juniors and seniors within the DPC honors college. My innovation addressed this challenge by attempting to help students gain the coping skills to deal with their transitions and promote the learning of skills in areas they find valuable.

As I moved forward with this problem of practice, I sought to better understand engagement of junior and senior honors students. Through my position with the college, I launched a survey in the spring of 2017 asking students to voice what they would like to see from our department moving forward. Of the approximate 700 students, I had a response rate of 117 students (17%). Of the 117, 42 identified as a junior or senior. On this survey, I listed events that we had held during the year and listed topics for events we planned for the upcoming year. Half of the junior and senior population indicated that "Would be interested in attending" events focused on finances. When asked if there were

any additional topics they would like to see, responses ranged from Taxes 101 to interview preparation. In addition, 24 of the 42 student indicated that they would like programming specific to their academic year. Based on this and my review of the literature, I chose to focus on Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory and Astin's (1999) student involvement theory as well as research focused on emerging adulthood.

Transition theory explores the manner in which students begin to negotiate their relationship with change, such as graduation. Student involvement theory provides a student development framework that guides the design of learning environments, such as living and learning communities like the honors college, the setting of this study. In addition, I sought to explore the engagement of junior and senior honors students through the usage of a developmental and sequential programming innovation that taught transitional coping skills through topics that are important to emerging adults. I explored students' engagement motivation by directly addressing their challenges and relationships to impending change, such as graduation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This study sought to understand the involvement of junior and senior honors college students. Previous to the study, there had been little to no engagement by the upper division students in the college's programs and events. The majority of students who participated in the activities were freshman and sophomore students. I hypothesized that the upper division students had low engagement as they were beginning to navigate a transition from student to graduate. This transition can produce anxiety and frustration as the students are preparing for varying degrees of uncertainty. I designed the innovation and associated study to help students gain skills to promote confidence in their ability to cope during transition and provide a set of useful skills useful to achieve professional and personal goals.

Setting

BHC is a selective residential honors college located on four campuses at Arizona State University (ASU)—the nation's largest public institution. Students within the program are aligned to the college of their major as well as the honors college. This study examined the downtown Phoenix campus (DPC) of the honors college located in Phoenix, Arizona. The honors population makes up 10% of incoming university students. The total DPC honors population is approximately 600 students. It is the second largest population for an ASU honors college. The staff supporting this campus consists of an Associate Dean, four faculty members, a Recruitment and Admissions officer, two Student Services Staff members, two Honors Academic Advisors, and an

Administrative Assistant. This day-to-day operational staff is smaller than the Tempe campus (the main campus) counterpart which boasts a staff over 65 people.

The Student Services department is responsible for the development and implementation of programs that support the honors college experience. At times, there are college or university initiatives that are adopted by each campus through programming. Typically, it is the responsibility each campus to create programs that align with the college, campus, and university priorities. I was responsible for creating the innovation through my role in Student Services—making this study feasible.

Participants

Participants in this study were students who qualified as juniors and seniors in the 2018-2019 academic year. These students had successfully met the requirements of their major to move forward towards completion of their third year. There were 285 juniors and seniors slated for the fall of 2018 at the DPC. I contacted all eligible students for the study by emailing the 285 potential participants (see Appendix A for the consent letter). I recruited both male and female students from all DPC majors through the usage of electronic communications I crafted. The presurvey resulted in 50 participants and the postsurvey netted 47 participants (reflected in Table 1). Participants who took the surveys were placed in a drawing to win a $10 Starbucks gift card purchased by the researcher. In order to be eligible for the gift card, the participant had to indicate they wanted to be in the drawing utilizing the link that navigated away from the original survey. Three winners were selected at random utilizing an online system. The students were notified via the online newsletter from the college. Once there was no response, individual emails

were sent to the winners and directions for picking up the gift card from the honors college suite front desk.

Participants indicated their interest in focus groups by clicking a link in the submission page of the presurvey. The link navigated away from the survey to a Google form that collected contact information. Using a separate site allowed for the identity of the participant taking the survey to remain anonymous. A total of 35 students indicated their interest in participating in the focus groups. Of the 35, eight showed up the day of the focus group. The first focus group had six participants and the second had two. The students who participated in the focus group were split between those who engaged in the innovation and those who did not. Four students did not participate or interact with the innovation. The remaining four participants had interacted with the innovation by either engaging in the material or physically attending the workshops. The participants in the focus groups were incentivized with bagels, pastries and juice purchased by the researcher. The focus group participants signed the waiver and consented verbally that they were willing to be recorded the focus group began. A copy of the form can be found in Appendix C of this document. Table 1 indicates the total of participation of students within the survey and focus groups.

Table 1

Frequency of Data Collected

Data	Frequency (*N)*	Percent *(of available students)*
Pre Survey	50	21%
Post Survey	47	20%
Focus Group One	6	17%
Focus Group Two	2	5.7%

Table two indicates the demographics of student participants in the presurvey.

Table 2

Presurvey Demographics

Characteristics	N	Academic Year
Gender		
Female	45	31 juniors
		14 seniors
Male	5	3 juniors
		2 seniors

Note: N=50

Table Three indicates the demographics of the postsurvey.

Table 3

Postsurvey Demographics

Characteristics	N	Academic Year
Gender		
Female	40	23 juniors 17 seniors
Male	6	2 juniors 4 seniors
Undisclosed	1	1 junior or senior

Note: N = 47.

Tables 2 and 2 indicate the demographic changes from presurvey to postsurvey. The drop in participants appear to be with the juniors but increase in senior participation. The survey also asked which academic college the participants are members to ensure representation from each college on campus. All colleges were represented in the study; College of Nursing and Health Innovation, College of Integrative Sciences and Arts, Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions, College of Health Solutions, and the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism.

Innovation

I designed the innovation to address the low involvement and engagement of juniors and seniors within the honors college through sequential programs. These students are considered emerging adults, the in between stage of adolescence and

young/middle adulthood. Emerging adults are roughly 18-25 years of age and are in a distinct period in their lives that are exceptionally ripe for exploration; and it is a time of instability, self-focus, and possibilities (Arnett, 2011). In order to address these emerging adults' transition from student to graduate, I developed a series of student events called "Life Hacks" to help students gain the skills that complement the 4s system of coping with transitions. These categories include: situation, self, support, and strategies (Schlossberg, 2011). I intentionally designed the innovation with emerging adults in mind. As stated in Chapter 2, there are three areas that define adulthood for emerging adults: accepting responsibility for themselves, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent (Arnett & Tanner, 2006). This innovation focused on helping students to begin to see themselves as adults who are equipped to handle the uncertainty of life.

Marketing

The innovation was marketed by creating individual and collective fliers and posting in the Barrett suite in the computer labs and sending it out electronically via our emailing system that included the entire population of active juniors and seniors. Additionally, the marketing team drafted a flier that listed all of the events and a small description. It was discovered just before the first event that the marketing materials had the wrong message for the first event including the wrong dates and times. The corrected version was then sent out a week later once new materials were collected. At this time we chose to include another event rather than cancelling the first event.

In order to increase the student interaction with the innovation, the content of the workshops were summarized and resources were put into a follow up email sent to the entire population of juniors and seniors. The first workshop had one senior participant however it was well attended by freshmen students. After discussing the low engagement, it was suggested by a colleague to attempt to increase the participants by sending electronic information and resources to the students. Sales Force marketing platform was utilized to send the follow emails with materials out to students. The open rate for the email was approximately 40% of the total population of juniors and seniors. The click rate was less than one percent.

All students were encouraged to participate in the program through marketing and a giveaway of a "Life Hacks Kit". This kit was purchased by the Student Services department as an incentive to attend honors college programs. The kit contained a book on organizing, a tool kit, a pack of batteries, first aid kit, meat thermometer, measuring cups, and a leather padfolio. The items were a combination of items that the honors staff indicated they were not aware that they needed when they moved into their first apartment. Students gained one entrance into the drawing for every attendance at the event. A master list of attendance was kept by the Program Coordinator of the Student Services department. Once the events concluded, all the names were placed into a randomizer online and the winners were selected by the computer.

Innovation Workshops

The "Life Hack" program was a series of six individual bi-weekly workshops. Each event lasted no more than an hour and was facilitated by myself and/or university

partners who are deemed knowledgeable in the seminar topic. The workshops alternated between Tuesdays and Thursdays. Each workshop's subject was framed to build transition coping skills defined in the 4s system. I designed the Life Hack program sessions to assist students in identifying the upcoming transition of graduation, embrace their role within the change, understand the resources and support that are available to them, and develop a strategies to achieve their goals.

Each session was tailored in the moment to have immediate and future implications based on the year of the students who attended. For example, during the professional development workshop, seniors were encouraged to leverage their thesis project in a job interview. Juniors were encouraged to find ways to expound their on or off campus jobs in ways that projected their role in a positive outcome or goal reached. Students were encouraged to the workshop with the understanding of what they should take away from the event based on their academic grade level.

The 4s model formed the skeleton of each program. No matter the topic, students explored the situation, their relationship to the situation, learned what supporting resources were available to them and had time to develop strategies to identify goals and implementation steps. The first and last workshop of the six Life Hack events focused on goal and strategy development.

"Planner Con". This was the first workshop that was marketed as a Life Hacks workshop. The name was a carryover from a previous year's popular event to draw a crowd. Previously, the namesake event was focused on helping freshman learn how to decipher a syllabus and learn how to preplan for the upcoming semester. The new Life

Hacks version was to help students develop a plan for their first steps after graduation. The marketing team was confused, however, and utilized previous marketing for the event. Thus, the event drew 40 freshman and only one senior. The event was hosted by the student services department and the presentation was retailored in the moment to fit the audience.

"Vision (Boards) & Values". This event was added to correct the mistakes for the first event and attract more juniors and seniors. The presenter was a residential Community Director who has a passion for vision boards. The presenter typically interacted with students through their role in the housing department. The presenter was given a copy of the 4s coping system and asked to incorporate it into their presentation. The presenter brought materials for creating a vision board and a power point that utilized technique breathing and mind mapping of goals. Students were asked to create academic goals since graduation was far for the students who attended.

"Self Care & Safety". This event was marketed as a conversation about online dating and safety. Self-care was discussed as a way to cope with the stress of dating. The presentation was conducted by an honors staff member who had recent experience in online dating. The safety portion of the workshop was conducted by an ASU PD (ASU police department) officer. The students learned "How Not to Get Murdered," the name of the online dating presentation. The students learned tips for keeping support networks informed of whereabouts and the importance of communicating what is happening in their dating scene through the usage of a social media app provided by the university. The officer provided statistics on crime rates in the area and provided students with

information on an app that connects students to ASU PD and emergency responders if needed. Two seniors, no juniors attended the event with the remaining students in their sophomore year.

"Professional development". This workshop was conducted by the ASU Career Services department. The director of the department was asked to put together a presentation about how to leverage the honors experience in an interview and how to negotiate a first job offer. The presenter was given the 4s coping system to incorporate. The students talked though the process of interviewing. The student learned how to identify and highlight their honors experiences on their resume and in their interviews. At least six juniors and seniors attended the event among four sophomores.

"Health and Cooking" . The health and cooking presenters were from the nutrition department. The presenter was asked to teach students how to create a healthy meal for under $10. The presenter was provided the 4s system and asked to incorporate it into the presentation. The presentation consisted of information on the food pyramid and general nutritional data. Four juniors and seniors attended this event along with three freshman andsophomores total.

"Finance" . This workshop was rescheduled twice based on the changing availability of the original presenter. Ultimately a new presenter was secured within a week of the event. The presenter was a real-estate broker with experience in insurance and debt management. The presenter was given the 4s system of coping and asked to incorporate it into the workshop. This presenter created budget sheets for students to understand how much education costs. The presenter talked about student loans and

credit vs debt cards. The presenter also talked about how students can create a plan of action for the goals and its cost. Two seniors attended the event with several sophomores.

"Life Planning" . The last seminar featured a panel of graduates who shared things they wish they would have learned prior to graduating and participated in a question and answer session. I obtained staff and student recommendations for panelists. The panelists selected were three Barrett alumni and three graduates from different institutions. Each panelist had a unique story: two were in graduate school, and the other four graduates had started their careers. This event had a total of six juniors and seniors mixed in with freshman and sophomores.

Innovation Timeline

Table 4 displays the timeline for the implementation of the innovation.

Table 4

Timeline of the Innovation Implementation

Procedure	Sequence	Action
Marketing of Events	August 7-November 20: Weekly	● Ad in the weekly honors college newsletter ● Social Media post in the downtown group of Facebook ● Printed flyers in the suite and dorms
Life Hack Event 1: Planner Con	August 30	Topic: Goal Setting and Life Plan ● Situation ● Self ● Support ● Strategy

Life Hack Event 2: Vision Boards & Values	September 13	Topic: Vision Boards ● Situation ● Self ● Support Strategy
Life Hack Event 3: Self Care & Safety	September 18	Topic: Self-Care and Safety ● Situation ● Self ● Support ● Strategy
Life Hack Event 4: Professional Development	September 27	Topic: Professional Development ● Situation ● Self ● Support ● Strategy
Life Hack Event 5: Health & Cooking	October 11	Topic: Health ● Situation ● Self ● Support ● Strategy
Life Hack Event 6: Finance	October 28	Topic: Fiscal Responsibility ● Situation ● Self ● Support ● Strategy
Life Hack Event 7: Graduate Panel	November 11	Topic: Goal Setting and Life Planning ● Situation ● Self ● Support ● Strategy

Research Design

The questions guiding this research surrounding junior and senior honors students were:

1. How might creating a year-specific programming model for junior and senior honors students impact their desire to become engaged in honors college programming?
2. How does a students' involvement in the honors college programming impact their perception of their preparedness to cope with the anticipated transition of graduation?

To address these questions, I used a mixed methods approach. This study looked into the perception of students and their ability to cope with transition. I chose a mixed methods approach for this study based on the usage of triangulation. Johnson and Christensen (2012) identify triangulation as "the term given when the researcher seeks convergence and corroboration of results from different methods studying the same phenomenon" (p. 439). For this study, I looked to examine, student perceptions of their preparedness to cope with transitions. I utilized surveys to understand the outcome of junior and senior honors student engagement within the innovation and focus groups to create a narrative of their perceptions of their preparedness to cope with transitions.

Quantitative Data

I distributed surveys at the beginning of the fall 2018 semester to both junior and senior participants (See Appendix B for the presurvey and postsurvey). The survey explored the motivation students have to participate in events addressing Research Question One. The survey had 23 questions and was broken down into four sections: extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, coping, and transitions.

The survey utilized a Likert-type rating scale based on the effectiveness in measuring attitudes, perceptions and behaviors (Mertler, 2014). Rating scales began with a statement and then asked the participant to rate the level of agreement/disagreement on a continuum. For the presurvey and postsurvey, I used a five-point scale with the five points defined as:

1 = not true

2 = rarely

3 = sometimes

4 = often

5 = true

Sample statements include:

Q3: I feel Barrett events/programs assisted in developing skills I will use after graduation.

Q12: When situations arise, I feel confident in my ability to assess the situation.

I distributed the presurvey in August via a direct email to the all active list of juniors and seniors. The survey developed a baseline of engagement within the honors college for juniors and seniors. I distributed the postsurvey on the last day of finals at the end of the academic semester in November. The presurvey and postsurvey questions were the same to gage change and frequency of choices. However, the names of the Life Hacks workshops were listed on the last survey and allowed students to indicate how they engaged in them. Students could select: attended, viewed electronic materials, or did not engage.

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data collection started with field notes of my interactions with participating juniors and seniors through my position as the Program Manager. My field notes were taken from one to one interactions between the students and me, candid group interactions, and interactions at events and programs. My ethnographic field notes attempted to capture and preserve indigenous meanings. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) argued that in order to capture the indigenous meanings, the researcher must be responsive to what the participant is concerned about using their own terms. Field notes offer a subtle and complex understanding of others routines, lives, and meanings.

Focus groups were the second form of qualitative data. I conducted two focus groups to gather student perceptions, feelings, and opinions (see Appendix C for the focus group protocols). The usage of focus groups allowed for the students' voices to narrate the data (Merriam, 2009). Focus groups are useful when time is limited and the benefit of participants feeling more comfortable speaking in a group setting rather than one on one (Mertler, 2014). This information provided a deeper look into the students' point of view. Johnson and Christensen (2012) contended that focus group should be comprised of 6-12 participants. I used email to invite all students who had indicated their intent to participate in the focus group on the presurvey. Initially, I only had three students respond with their availability to attend the focus groups. The rest of the focus group participants arrived at the time of the focus group without registering. There were eight total participants in two focus groups.

Table 5

Timeline for Implementation

Procedure	Sequence	Action
Preparation	April 2018	● Preparation and submission of materials to IRB for approval.
Presurvey Preparation	August 2018	● August: Distribution of invitation and consent information to incoming juniors and seniors. ● August: Distribution of presurvey.
Innovation Phase	August-November 2018	● August: Roll-out marketing materials for program to introduce students to programming track ○ Bulletin: weekly honors events newsletter advertising innovation ○ Email: dedicated email to juniors and seniors only inviting them to event ● August: Begin Life Hacks workshops ● September-November: Life Hacks Workshops
Post Innovation data collection	November 2018	● November: Conducted two focus groups of juniors and seniors ● November: Distribution of postsurvey.

Table five displays a timeline of the research study and implementation. The focus groups were recorded and transcribed for accuracy in analysis. The first and

second focus groups took place after the Life Hacks workshops concluded. Both focus groups were held back-to-back in the conference room of the honors college. The focus groups lasted approximately an hour each. The second focus group was interrupted by a phone call. The call indicated there may be a safety threat to the building and the research investigated and returned to focus group once given clearance. The recording was paused and resumed once it was safe to do so.

Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

The analysis methods reflected the mixed methods research approach. Mertler (2014) discussed the role of data analysis as a way to break chunks of data down into smaller sets of information to be easily managed. Based on the nature of my investigation, I used both inferential and descriptive statistics for the quantitative data sets from the survey. The utilization of an independent *t*-test allowed for the examination of growth or non-growth in the perceptions of juniors and seniors ability to cope with transitions such as graduation—the second research question. The *t*-test measures the differences between groups (Mertler, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). I also ran a repeated measures *t*-test to measure the differences between the same group between presurvey and post-test measurements. The first research question centers on the growth of the desire to become engaged within the college. These tests addressed the research questions from a quantitative side of the mixed methods approach.

In order to increase the external validity of the study, the entire population (N = 235) had an equal opportunity to participate in the study. The selection process for the sub-set of the population who indicated their interest in participating in the focus group was selected by convenience. The presurvey and postsurveyc were exactly the same to increase internal validity (Clark & Creswell, 2015). Prior to the study being dispersed, I sent a pilot out to a convenience sample of 14 students. The students took the survey using the online platform, Survey Monkey. I was able to speak to the students and, based on their feedback, clarified two questions on the survey by changing the words.

Qualitative Analysis

I utilized grounded theory to analyze the focus groups. The focus groups were audio recorded by me and transcribed through a paid service. Charmaz (2014) discussed grounded theory as a way for researchers to examine the data in a systematic way from the start of the research. In addition, I used it to compare data with emerging categories to ultimately demonstrate any relations to categories and concepts. Coding the qualitative data allows for me to view the data in a different lens than the participant's interpretations. The initial coding process began with in vivo coding. This type of coding allowed me to pay attention to the participants' language (Saldana, 2013; Charmaz, 2014). For example, in the first focus group, a student described the loneliness they experienced for the first time in college, I chose the following code, "Loneliness just sitting around being with myself ...it was awkward." The process of in vivo coding utilized the participants' own words to categorize the data. In qualitative research the criteria for reliability is focused on the quality of recording and documenting data (Flick,

2014). The focus groups are recorded and transcribed to ensure the student voice is verbatim. The second round of coding utilized focused coding, using the most significant or frequent codes as a lens to re-analyze the data (Saldana, 2013; Charmaz, 2014). This secondary method of the qualitative analytic process has less definitive boundaries and participants can have different degrees of belonging to the categories (Saldana, 2013). As an example, for this round of coding, the same code earlier was coded as 'loneliness." I chose this to allow the representation of the individual student journey and their fluid relationship with transitions.

For the ethnographic journaling and note taking, Flick (2014) suggested the use of conventions: a combination of signs to increase reliability. I began the field note analysis with closed reading to elaborate or identify areas of uncertainty. Open coding followed the close reading and will allowed me to create phrases of sections to identify categories and analytic insights. For a section of field notes describing the candid conversation at the end of the Health and Cooking Life Hack workshop, I labeled a portion abandonment. This described how the students spoke about their relation to staff members only to have the staff turnover, and in some cases, more than once. Finally, I identified from my memos themes and concepts to explore further. An example of one of my memo themes, was "relationships" which turned into an overall theme of the findings. Once I identified core themes, relationships, frustration, abandonment, and unknowing, from the field notes, they were triangulated with the themes from the previous data (presurvey and postsurvey and focus groups). As mentioned above, triangulation is a method used to increase the reliability of the overall study (Merriam, 2009).

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This action research study sought to explore the low engagement of juniors and seniors within the honors college. This study is a mixed method study with an innovation that focuses on developing year-specific programming through a series of events called "Life Hacks." This study utilized the lens of student engagement theory (Astin, 1991) to understand student involvement and transition theory (Schlossberg,

2011) to understand the progression to graduation. While students participated in the innovation events, I collected data through presurvey and postsurvey focus groups, and my field notes in a mixed method design. This research sought to add to the sparse research surrounding upper division honors students: those with a junior and senior status.

In this chapter, I delve into the quantitative and qualitative data obtained and discuss the findings around each research question. This study was driven the following research questions:

1. How might creating a year-specific programming model for junior and senior honors students impact their desire to become engaged in honors college programming?
2. How does students' involvement in the honors college programming impact their perception of their preparedness to cope with the anticipated transition of graduation?

For each research question I present the quantitative findings first followed by the qualitative findings. This research represents information from both juniors and seniors in the honors college at Arizona State University at the downtown campus.

Research Question One

Quantitative Findings

The first research question explored if creating academic year-specific programming impacted students' desire to become engaged within the honors college. The presurvey and postsurvey consisted of four constructs with 23 questions. The postsurvey had six additional questions on the six Life Hacks workshop. Students indicated whether they engaged by attending or viewing the materials, or if they chose not to engage at all.

Checking the frequencies of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in SPSS, the majority of the variables increased slightly. For example, *Q2. I have gained skills from Barrett events/programs that will aid in my ability to obtain employment after graduation*, had a presurvey innovation mean of 3.60 and a post innovation mean of 3.72. Question four, again, had a slight increase in the average score reported: *Q4, I am more motivated to attend Barrett events/programs when my friends are going.* The pretest mean of question four was 4.36 and the posttest became 4.50. While the majority (nine of 11) of the posttest scores increased from pre to posttest, there were two questions that indicated slight decreases in motivation. Both questions fell into the extrinsic motivation category.

The first question to indicate a decline in the average response was question one: *I am looking forward to graduating from Barrett because of the honors certificate*. The presurvey mean was 4.46 and the posttest mean was 4.24. The second question that showed a decline from pretest to posttest was, *I feel Barrett events/programs assisted in developing skills I will use after graduation*. The pretest sore had a mean score of 3.46 and the post survey had a score of 3.39. Table 6 represents the frequencies of the extrinsic motivation for the presurvey.

Table 6

Frequencies-Extrinsic Motivation-Presurvey

	Honors Certificate	Employment Skills	Development Skills	Motivation	Attend Food	Attend Swag
Mean	4.46	3.60	3.46	4.36	4.08	3.76
Median	5.00	4.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	4.00
Mode	5	5	3	5	5	5
Std. Deviation	.734	1.143	1.199	1.102	1.275	1.379

Note. N=50.

Table 7 represents the frequencies of the extrinsic motivation on the postsurvey.

Table 7

Frequencies-Extrinsic Motivation-Postsurvey

	Honors Certificate	Employment Skills	Development Skills	Motivation	Attend Food	Attend Swag
Mean	4.24	3.72	3.39	4.50	4.24	4.20
Median	5.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Mode	5	4	4	5	5	5
Std. Deviation	1.214	1.026	1.220	.863	1.196	1.088

Note. N=46. Missing=3.

Table 7 displays an independent t-test results for extrinsic motivation factors for engagement. This test examined both the pre and the posttest extrinsic variables. There was no statistical significance found from the difference from the presurvey and postsurvey. The tables previously displayed indicated the average scores answered on both of the surveys. As indicated, some scores went down and a possible explanation may come from the qualitative data.

Table 8

Independent *t-test* for Extrinsic Motivation

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Honors Certification	Equal variances assumed	7.412	0.008	1.088	94	0.279	0.221	0.203	-0.182	0.624
	Equal variances not assumed			1.067	72.798	0.289	0.221	0.207	-0.192	0.633
Employment Skills	Equal variances assumed	1.855	0.176	-0.528	94	0.599	-0.117	0.222	-0.559	0.324
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.530	93.946	0.597	-0.117	0.221	-0.557	0.322
Development Skills	Equal variances assumed	0.009	0.924	0.278	94	0.782	0.069	0.247	-0.422	0.559
	Equal variances not assumed			0.278	93.039	0.782	0.069	0.247	-0.422	0.560
Motivation	Equal variances assumed	2.212	0.140	-0.689	94	0.493	-0.140	0.203	-0.544	0.264
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.696	91.712	0.488	-0.140	0.201	-0.540	0.260

Qualitative Findings

Both focus groups were comprised of students who attended the Life Hacks innovation and students who chose not to participate. There were a total of eight participants. Of the eight participants, four attended at least one Life Hacks event. Three of the eight participants interacted with materials distributed. One of the three, did not attend in person. Focusing on the first research question, students who attended or interacted with the innovation were asked to share about their experiences. Students who chose not to participate where then asked if hearing about their peers experience impacted their desire to attend. Many of the participants who chose not to attend a Life Hacks event, after hearing from their peers who did attend, expressed that the concept of the events was something that could benefit them. One participant stated:

> I like the concept of like more professional development stuff—that's really cool. I think that I just have a bad habit of not paying attention to other events and then I feel overwhelmed. If I had the time to go to it and if I made time to go to them I think that they would be intriguing.

Another student responded to the question, “After hearing other members talk about their experience does it impact your desire to participate in programs like life hacks in the future? Why or why not?” While the concept was something they saw as beneficial, this student talked about having the ease of access to information as a deterrent from attending:

> Not really. Just like Google, no offense, like when I read through the materials and whatnot I felt like I could just gone to Google. And that's what I do for most of the things, now that I'm about to go out into the world. I looked up, "how much

money should I save?" It's right there on the Internet. If I wanted to go to an event, I wouldn't want to sit down. I would want to experience something. So if we're talking about healthy eating, I would love if a chef came or something and he was cooking... and I could ask him, "Oh, how do you do that?" I don't know... something where I couldn't just do it myself. I couldn't just get the information myself. Some type of experience that I could only get from going to the event.

Another participant followed the previous students with agreement that the experience is important. The student indicated that being "presented at" is something they encounter every day in class:

> I think from the discussion today, I wouldn't go to one tomorrow. But I think from the feedback or if we did surveys on the Life hacks and it moving forward, I would be interested in going. I agree with you [acknowledging peer]. I think that there should be more student interaction, a more interactive way of having a Life Hacks than just sitting and watching a presentation.

The students indicated that after hearing from their peers that did attend, they would be interested in attending Life Hacks or a similar focused event pending changes indicated in the focus group.

Research Question One Summary

While both research questions are flanked with quantitative and qualitative research, it is the analytic groupings of themes that provided a richer insight into the data. The quantitative data indicated that while students may not be as motivated by the thought of earning an honors designation as a stimulus for graduation, the closer they get to achieving the goal, they are still interested in

engaging with the honors college. Participants may be more likely motivated by the perceived benefits/value of the event or program such as *Q2* indicated regarding perceived skills obtained from events to aid with future employment gain. It appeared as if the participants did not feel that they will use the skills after graduation, but may see the employment search as an extension of schooling or as a holding period until the next phase, working, begins. Based on the qualitative data, it appeared that student participants thought the concept of the Life Hacks could provide some beneficial skills. It appeared as if the students needed more of an interactive experience rather than a presentation. This is based on a participant who indicated that being talked-at is not something they would want to devote their time. However, if there were experiences with a more hands-on approach the students would be more receptive thus engaging with the honors college more.

Research Question Two

Quantitative Findings

The second research question focused on the students' perceptions of their preparedness to cope with the anticipated transition of graduation and how involvement in the honor's college programming might assist in that transition. In the presurvey and postsurvey, I asked questions based on two constructs related to the research question. The first construct was Coping Skills and the second was transition. An example of a coping skills construct statement was, *Q15. I feel confident in my ability to develop an action plan to achieve my goals.* The statements were rated on a Likert scale from one to five. One represented "not true" and five reflected "true." Table 6 indicates the

frequencies of the variables in the Coping Skills construct. Looking at the average score of each variable, four of the seven displayed an increase. The following questions increased in the mean score in the postsurvey:

Q14. I can clearly identify my needs.

Q15. I feel confident in my ability to develop an action plan to achieve my goals.

Q17. When faced with challenges, I focus on the things I can control.

Q18. I feel I have gained skills from college programming to assist me in coping with change.

Based on the increase in the average answers from students, it is possible that student participants felt more confident in their ability to cope with transitions in certain aspects. Additionally, the participants were more able to identify their needs, develop an action plan, and possibly able to focus on things they could influence at a slightly better rate at the end of the semester than the start of the first semester. Table 7 represents the presurvey frequencies using descriptive statistics. The tables indicate the changes reflected in the statement above. The following questions decreased in the mean score from the presurvey to postsurvey:

Q12. When situations arise, I feel confident in my ability to assess the situation.

Q13. When things go wrong, I feel I have the skills to navigate the challenge.

Q16. When situations arise, I can readily find resources to assist me.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics –Frequencies Table Presurvey

	Confident	Navigating	Need Identity	Confidence Goals	Finding Resources	Confidence Focus	Skill Gain
Mean	4.64	4.58	4.34	4.42	4.48	4.24	3.68
Median	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Std. Deviation	0.485	0.575	0.798	0.702	0.814	0.894	1.316
Sum	232	229	217	221	224	212	184

Note. N=50. Missing=1.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics-Frequencies Table Postsurvey

	Confident	Navigating	Need Identity	Confidence Goals	Finding Resources	Confidence Focus	Skill Gain
Mean	4.54	4.57	4.41	4.48	4.43	4.30	3.74
Median	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.50	5.00	4.00
Mode	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Std. Deviation	0.690	0.688	0.777	0.809	0.620	0.891	1.237
Sum	209	210	203	206	204	198	172

Note. N=46. Missing=3.

The second construct was transition. Four of the five variables reflected a decrease in the mean from presurvey to the postsurvey. The following variables exhibited a marginal menial decline:

Q19. I feel prepared for graduation.

Q20. I have a sense of direction for my life after graduation.

Q21. I feel I will be successful after college.

Q23. I feel I am gaining enough skills in college to become successful at "adulting" when I graduate.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics-Frequencies Postsurvey

	Graduate	Post Graduate	Post College Success	Post-Graduation Network	Adult Success
Mean	3.98	4.15	4.57	4.41	4.17
Median	4.00	4.50	5.00	5.00	4.00
Mode	4[a]	5	5	5	5
Std. Deviation	0.931	1.095	0.779	0.858	0.851
Sum	183	191	210	203	192

Note. N=46. Missing=3. a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics-Frequencies Presurvey

	Graduate	Post Graduate	Post College Success	Post-Graduation Network	Adult Success
Mean	4.02	4.28	4.73	4.30	4.20
Median	4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.00
Mode	4	5	5	5	5
Std. Deviation	0.958	0.834	0.531	0.863	0.926
Sum	201	214	232	215	210

N=50. Missing=1.

The variable that exhibited an increase in average response score was *Q22. I have a network of support that will extend beyond graduation.* The beginning of the semester mean for this variable was 4.30 and the end of semester mean was 4.41. Tables 9 and Table 10 illustrate the descriptive statistics in frequencies for both presurvey and postsurvey respectively. This finding indicates that student participants may have more of a network of support established by the end of the semester.

Qualitative Findings

During the focus groups, participants were asked if attending the Life Hacks helped them gain something useful for the graduation transition. All of the students in

the focus groups who attended one or more of the Life Hacks workshops indicated the panel of recent graduates was the most useful of the six workshops. A participant stated:

> I think the one that helped me the most was the last one with the panel of the people who graduated recently. None of them were like perfectly relevant to me because they had all stayed at ASU for the most part or had done something very different than I did. But I still thought it was good to hear their experience and have -get an idea of what to expect after graduating and moving around and doing all that because it's something new for me. Get on that level of doing a little bit more on my own than I did when I came here.

Another participant choose the same workshop to provide an example of things learned to assist with transitions such as graduation. The student stated:

> The only one that I think was helpful—that I learned-that was like "Oh Okay". Was the last one where it was the panel of graduates? It was more of an open discussion of what are things you didn't know. How did you go about doing this? And that one kind of like reaffirmed, you might not get a job after graduation and you're gonna need to learn how to prep yourself for finances and like, what is it called? Your retirement plans. And like all of this stuff like. But it was more of like, "these are all the things you don't know yet!" - Not how do we go about doing it. But it was enough to tell me what I needed to know. Right?

Finally, another participant gave insight on why the panel was their selection. The student focused on the importance of getting advice from someone

close in age with a similar experiences, like the panel of recent graduates. A student participant commented:

> I would agree with what [peer] said. I did like the panel idea because one of the things that I have enjoyed the most about Barrett events, in general, is that when we have people come in who have just experienced what we're about to experience. Who have just moved out of the dorms and you know I get to talk to somebody who's just transitioning into an apartment or somebody who's just graduated and I'm about to graduate Because they're the ones who are like me they're just like me. They just experience what I experienced and now they've done this next step. So they know what to expect. They know what they've just been thrown into. So that they can give me one or two of these helpful pieces of advice about what I'm about to face.

In my field notes for the graduate panel Life Hack workshop, I wrote about the "pure silence" of students when the panelists spoke about the loneliness of job hunting. The panelist said, "I would go days, weeks, and even months without hearing anything." A student broke the silence with, "So they never follow up?" inquiring about follow-up process on submitted applications. As the panelists began to describe the many ways that potential employers have followed up, the students seemed a little taken aback at how "cold" the search process can be. The idea of rejection had become more real to students as the panelists began to speak about "crushing" interviews and knowing they were a great fit without getting the job. A student asked about how they keep focused with so much

rejection, and all the panelists laughed because of the response, “I have bills”. I wrote that I was unsure if the students fully grasped the importance of hope or if they saw this as a glimpse of “the dark ages” of the job search.

In the focus group, a student spoke about their personal experience in the job search and what they need for support while going through transitions such as graduation. The student stated

> I think more honesty. Like for me my transition was just searching for a job and I just didn't understand how much of a task it was going to be. When you do job preparedness and everything you usually get the whole. "Oh this is your resume. This is your interview skills." It's just like, "here's some networks, go out" but just interviewing itself. . . . I had to go to an interview, a sit down for dinner where they introduced themselves and you talk and then you have like a one-on-one with somebody then you have an actual interview and then you have to wait. And they never tell you about the waiting. It was just like, sometimes just don't get back to you. Sometimes they get back to you and it's not the news you wanted. And like how do you cope with that? And then just like traveling, I had to fly out to the other side of the country just to go to an interview and then some interviews aren't just like sit-down, like a person's right there in front you just like asking questions. You have to present. I had to also sit down at dinner. That's another thing like I didn't get. I had to get that from my parents. They told me, "Don't order anything too expensive—usually just order what the other person's ordering if they're ordering anything." But I feel as though we do the minimum [in programming] in a sense because we want to be as like general as possible.

> Because there's stuff like interview skills and stuff. It definitely prepares everybody in that sense but just being honest, there's definitely a lot more that goes into this. There's a lot more time and commitment that goes into this. It's not just going to be a resume and interview all the time.

It appeared that participants needed more transparency in order to feel prepared. Another student indicated their frustration with not knowing. The participant agreed with the previous student's statement:

> Transparency is key . . . I think a very common thing that we teach people is, "you're going to go to college and you're going to get a job." Realistically that doesn't happen for a lot of people—like a lot of people don't have a job lined up prior to graduation. A lot of people, from transitioning to the dorms to an apartment don't know how to even go about looking for an apartment or finding an apartment or what is a lease? How do I furnish? What is APS [an electric company]? Like versus SRP [an electric company]? All of these things and college is supposed to prepare you for life but it's more like, "I'm going to throw you into this situation and you're going to have to sink or swim and hopefully you swim and you figure it out. But there's not a whole lot of, "let me teach you how to swim before you sink." It's more of just like "here you go." . . . When you move into the dorms it's like, "here's the roommate agreement. This is all we're going to help to teach you how to get along with somebody." And granted roommate agreements help but they're not everything. There's still a lot like... Some people don't know how to communicate with other people. I understand that there's

certain skills you can't teach people. But at least the honesty and the transparency that fights will happen and that you are going to feel lonely sometimes.

A student spoke about an unanticipated transition of breaking up with a partner. They stated:

> So I guess I've had a lot of different transitions but I feel like for the anticipated ones I always was prepared because I anticipated them so I was able to mentally prepare myself for whatever was coming ahead but for anything unanticipated. . . . I feel like kind of rocks your world a little bit. Like if it's a breakup or someone passes away. Those little things that's always kind of like a ripple effect or shock. But I feel like I had enough of a support network to kind of like help me in those times or therapy that were able to be there for me even specifically Barrett. I remember being in the Barrett lobby when I had a break up and I was sobbing and eating Twizzlers and they were just like there for me. I was trying to casually eat the Twizzlers and tell them I broke up with someone and then I just started sobbing. But then like having them there for me really helped me and it was just like really important that I have people around me when those like life transitions come up and I feel like that is usually what keeps me stable.

Another student referenced the importance of having support and information come directly from individuals who are close to the students, parents, peers, staff, etc. This student stated:

> Now that I'm a junior in nursing school, the seniors have been the biggest help for me. And I came to you (the researcher) when I was thinking about moving in with

my boyfriend because you're married, you have kids, you are the mom away from home.

I made a note about this student's conversation with me regarding the move with the partner. The conversation was geared on healthy relationships and compromise. In addition the student and I discussed ways that they could stay involved with the college, however, I noted that the student was consumed with the idea of long-term relationship and career. The student spoke to what transpired and why engagement within the important was important to them stating:

> I had it this semester and my first semester of freshman year, I had a really rough time with—I guess you could categorized as loneliness. . . . And then this semester I, over the summer I had moved into an apartment with my boyfriend -and then we broke up. I had to move back home, with my parents, and that was just it was - like so hard. I have 7:30am classes, Monday-Friday and having to leave at 6:30am was really hard. And I was like, "This sucks." I love my parents and its great having them but I just hated like being there. I would get back there when they're already asleep just because I'm a very busy person, so I had to reach out to you (Researcher-Student Services) and be like, "hey! I can't do this. I need to be back in this community."

One of the variables on the pre and post innovation survey regarded the student's perception regarding their ability to identify needs and when faced with challenges, their ability to find a resource. The student reached out to me mid-late semester to let me know how lonely they were feeling. This is a student who started out being heavily involved and moved off campus and no longer attended events. I believe that if there was

a decrease in their perception to navigate challenges, it could have stemmed from being able cope with being wrong and accepting responsibility for their actions. Many of the students equated adulthood with survival literally and figuratively. I asked the focus groups what constitutes adulthood. A student retorted, “you survive”. Another student offered:

> I do not feel that I was an adult until I got married. and I don't think I would feel like I'm adult if I wasn't married right now because it just made me go through a lot of adult decisions like having a lease in your name that’s a home, buying a home, making a joint bank account -like those big things make me feel like an adult and that would be my personal interpretation of adulthood.

The entire focus group erupted into laughter as the student spoke about survival—the kind of laughter that seemed like a release. The same student followed up when asked, “How does one learn the skills to be an adult?”:

> Yeah. Adulthood is survival. Like, "oh Bills!" I survived them. I'm more of an adult. Oh Job!-its Kicking my butt right now, but I survived it. Adult. Grocery shopping, I can now feed myself. I'm still alive because I fed myself, survival. Adult. [Audible giggles and laughs and agreement] Really. Like you can survive from your own way means- Adulthood.

When participants were asked about specifics on adulthood, and what skills one needs the answers complimented one another. A student stated:

> Financial responsibility is a really big one. I don't know how to make a budget. Very well. I know how to make one—I don’t know how to follow one- I should say and then also just being like making life decisions on your own and or with

> others who are like your partner or maybe. I feel like when I was a kid it was like a lot of decisions are made for you. But now you have to be accountable for your own life.

Financial responsibility was corroborated by most students as a factor of adulthood, another student stated

> I think school's a safety net. Like we're all young adults. I think we'd all like to think of ourselves as adults because we're like, "we're grown, nobody gets to tell me what to so anymore." right? But like- and Yes! Paying for the majority of your bills is a big thing.

Another student spoke to stability as a factor of adulthood equating stability with not need assistance from parents. Another student spoke about utilizing scholarships and loans quotes to financial instability and lack of adulthood. Of the eight participants in the focus group, one indicated they did not feel they are an adult and six indicated somewhere in between. The last participant indicated yes, they feel they are an adult but not fully functioning, stating:

> I always joke that I'm going to law school because I'm not ready to be an adult. Because I want more school because I'm just not ready. But at the same time, I think all of us are adults here. It’s just how well functioning of an adult are you. We are all able to make our own decisions. We're all able to do these things but we still have the safety nets. We still have the things like others we're able to rely on but that doesn't make us any less adults. We still have adult responsibilities - even now in college and it's just how much of it do we take upon ourselves. And

where we learn... As for where we learn from... I feel like we just learned from all the systems around us.

Research Question Two Summary

The second research question inquired about transitions and if student involvement impacts their perception to cope with transitions. The quantitative data indicated that participants feel they are more able to clearly identify their needs, develop a plan, and when faced with challenges, focus more on things they can control. Overall, the students indicated that they perceived an increase in skills gained through college programming to assist them with coping. The variables that decreased slightly remained in the same base scale number: four. The score four indicated "often" as a choice for students. The change was not statistically significance to warrant a conclusion that students felt negatively. It is important to notice that while the decline in response was minimal the areas address had to so with challenges and situations. It may indicate that students still perceived challenges as something they could deal with but may need assistance in identifying resources that will help them in developing a plan to navigate challenges.

The second construct was transition. Again there was a statistically insignificant menial decline in the average response. The average response was a four indicating "often" for the variables. This indicated that participants may have felt they often have a sense of direction for life after graduation. They indicated that they often felt like they are prepared for graduation and there was often a sense of direction for life after college. They also often felt they will be successful after college and at adulting. Through the

qualitative data, students expressed their need for knowing the uncertain. They spoke about how helpful it was to have a recent graduate tell them what to expect. They seemed to recognize there were areas of living life outside of graduation that they had to prepare for such as rejection and loneliness. The theme of preparation seemed to be concurrent in the qualitative data.

The student participant previously quoted flowed into talking about how they have used parents, cousins who have "gone through" as a community of support. This could have been an indicator as to why the students gravitated to the graduate panel as opposed to the other workshops with professional presenters. For many students in the study, relationships were important for how they navigated transitions.

Based on the student feedback, it appeared as though some juniors and senior participants were aware of their ability to cope with transitions and understood the importance of engaging with the college. This understanding came from the challenges they were forced to deal with, whether it was emotional battles such as loneness and rejection or the transition to and from campus housing. These challenges forced the students to face their need for resources, support and to face responsibility. One student stated, "So now I'm just thinking about how if this is one semester was that much survival…What is the rest of my life going to be like?" I believe the facets of the study sparked a conversation regarding adulthood that brings it closer to reality. For many of the participants, they were given the opportunity to talk through what their expectations and discovered that the community of the honors college can become an avenue for processing transitions such as graduation.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This chapter is addresses the larger themes that emerge from the quantitative and qualitative findings. Additionally, I discuss the limitations of the study and lessons learned from the study that could improve further research. Based on reflection of the larger themes and limitations, I provide recommendations for implications for practice in the field of higher education in addition to my current practice and research.

Main Themes

This study focused on exploring junior and senior students' engagement with the honors college. The study sought to examine students' motivation and the potential of impact utilizing year-specific programming. In addition, my research examined the impact of the honors college programming on students' perceptions of their ability to cope with transitions such as graduation. Based on this mixed methods research, three themes surfaced regarding emotions, relationships, and expectations. The rich qualitative data has informed the direction for all of the themes. I found that emotion played a vital role in participants' abilities to cope with transitions. Additionally, relationships had a role in students' decision making process and directly influenced their support networks. Finally, the expectation of the role of the university and college was foundational to participants' relationship with the institution. The expectations students set for themselves influenced their understanding and definition of adulthood. In what follows, I discuss the themes in relation to the theoretical frameworks presented in Chapter Two.

Emotions

Astin's (1999) theory of involvement rests on the premise that involvement is the investment of energy. He identified energy as something that is physical and psychological. He emphasized students' active participation in their learning process. Before the study, I expected that time commitment would be a hurdle that would prevent students from engaging in the Life Hacks series.

From my analysis, it appears as though emotion, the psychological energy, seems to be a greater focus than physical energy. Juniors and seniors in the study were invested in the honors college through their emotions. When asked about their transitions, participants talked about managing their emotions and processing them with the staff of the college. This may indicate that engagement may not simply translate directly to attendance at events. Engagement could also include interacting emotionally to the staff.

Astin's (1999) involvement theory focused on the action of a student rather than the motivation. One student spoke about her difficulty in making a transition from living with a partner to returning home; however, the student utilized honors college staff to process each step of the transition process. Others spoke about professional and personal transitions and all included the energy of expressing their emotions to an honors college staff member. This student utilized their energy and effort to take action to reach out and meet with staff.

The student participants allowed their emotions to dictate their points of view. For example, one student mentioned their view of adulthood as that of survival. When pressed on how this came to be, the student indicated that the semester's challenges influenced their perception. Additionally, three senior student participants noted that

there were many transitions and challenges concentrated in their last year of college that they wished it was not all at once. What I found most interesting was how the participants seemed to equate change and challenges with instability. In Arnett's (2004) emerging adulthood theory, he identified instability as a characteristic of this developmental stage. Participants expressed that they felt lonely in managing the challenges and transitions, thus making survival a recurrent theme they associated with adulthood. This instability in relationships and emotions reflects the characteristic of the emerging adulthood developmental stage. While the students felt lonely, they sought support but assumed the person offering support could not actively identify with their situation, regardless of their past experiences. A few of the senior participants concluded that managing their emotions were important in order to develop a plan for survival thus an emergence into adulthood.

Relationships

The third sector of the 4s coping system is support (Schlossberg, 2011). It references the student's ability to identify a support system. The quantitative findings indicated a slight decrease from presurvey to postsurvey in regard to participants' ability to identify a support system in the event of a challenge. The questions' mean was high in the presurvey indicating that students in the study felt quite comfortable in identifying their resources. The slight decline did not move the needle one way or the other; confidence in their ability remained stable.

While the participants talked about their battles with loneliness, for example, they noted that relationships with staff, peers, and family were important to their decision making process and the construction of a support network. It was clear that the junior

and senior participants were aware of the transition to graduation, but seemed to struggle with the balance of autonomy and dependence. When asked about whether they considered themselves to be adults, six of the eight participants said "maybe." This finding supports the literature indicating that emerging adulthood is a time of instability but also a time of in-between (Arnett, 2011). This feeling of in-between was highlighted by the students indicating their ability to make decisions for themselves but not having the resources or experiences that "qualify" them for adulthood. During the focus group, many of the students spoke about their transition to college and the honors college. College was an expectation for them by parents or other authority figures such as high school teachers and counselors, and as a result, their actions followed suit. The relationships with these people encouraged participants to act by applying to the honors or the university and could thus have a comparable effect on their post-graduation plans.

While managing emotions appeared as a reoccurring theme, I also found that participants' emotions were often triggered by existing relationships or lack thereof. Students seemed to struggle with the process of changing relationships. For example, two students spoke about the evolution and ultimately severing of romantic relationships; it was clear that searching for support for these unanticipated transitions in their relationships is more reactionary and impulsive. I concluded that these two participants did not consider the evolution of relationships as a constant. As a result, the lack of understanding how relationships can become fluid may have played a role in the magnification of students feeling lonely. As the students began to speak about loneliness as a major emotion they have experienced as a junior or senior, the lack of relatable relationships surfaced. Students mentioned that they had friends but none they felt could

discuss the emotions with, possibly for fear of being judged or not being able to manage the situation.

Building mentoring relationships with staff members seemed to be another way that students' identified honors college staff as a resource that could assist in coping with transitions. Half of the students in the focus group spoke about working on managing their transitions with staff to help identify options, weigh outcomes, and be a soundboard. The students identified various staff members that had assisted in academic, relationship, professional transitions. For those interactions shared within the focus group, it resulted in the students feeling supported and their ability to identify resources and make informed decisions.

Expectations

The theme of expectations emerged through the participant's identification of their expectations of the college and themselves. Ultimately, they communicated what constitutes adulthood for them: financial stability, consistency, making decisions that impact others, and being self-sufficient. The topic of adulthood, from the student participant perspective, mirrored the three main targets identified by the emerging adulthood theory (Arnett, 2011) that are important skills for transition to adulthood.

The participants in the focus group spoke about their expectations of the University as an entity that helps them further their career but also as a place of exploration. Many of the students spoke about the importance of taking advantage of the many opportunities at the college but feeling pressed for time to complete the checklist of activities and prospects they established for themselves. They spoke about the expectation of college to make them an expert in their field as a freshman. Based on one

student's response in the focus group there seemed to be a slow realization that college will provide them with skills of the field but that alone does not make them the expert they originally sought out to be.

As the participants spoke about the expectations of themselves they began to indicate key moments where they themselves will be an adult. One participant was recently married and spoke to the internal grappling they felt with making decisions that impact self and others. The emerging adulthood theory indicated that people within this stage are developmentally self-focused. The three criterion indicated by the theory are: independent decision making, financial independence and accepting personal responsibility (Arnett, 2011).

A participant indicated that they were closer to being an adult not because of their marriage but through the experiences of becoming and being married. The student spoke about the amount of learning and effort that occurred to make decisions that impact another person as the rationale to feeling closer to adulthood. The key aspect of adulthood for this participant and the majority of the participants is financial stability. All of the participants spoke to the safety net and dependency of being in college. Many of the participants utilize scholarships, financial aid, and family support to maintain their current financial portfolios despite having some form of work. Again, this aligns closely with the emerging adulthood theory that found one of the top criterion of adulthood is financial independence (Arnett, 2000).

The participants spoke about their personal expectations and the journey that brought them to accepting the responsibility of making choices and accepting the consequences of their results. The first level of acceptance that emerged was their ability

to orchestrate their academic experience. They indicated the expectation of the college to provide opportunities but it took years for them to realize they were in control of taking advantage of the opportunities. Many of the participants looked to be guided and directed to the right opportunities but came to a realization that they themselves are responsible for making those choices. They began to speak more about taking the responsibility of teaching themselves or seeking knowledge of the things they realized they needed to know. For example one participant indicated they did not know what to do during a sit-down dinner interview. They sought help through an established relationship and searched the internet for tips.

Limitations of the Study

As with any research study, there are limitations to take into consideration. This was an action research study and therefore the ability to generalize is limited; action research studies focus on cycles of research within a single area of influence.
The survey presented its own challenges. Although the survey data collected provided insight on student motivation and their perceptions, the results were not statistically significant to generalize for the larger student population. Based on the reliability test, the constructs were not related resulting in the discovery that more constructs may have been hidden within those originally listed.

Nonequivalence is a challenge to internal validity for this study. According to Smith and Glass (1987), nonequivalence is the presumption that two groups are not observed equally. During the second focus group, an emergency phone call was received indicating a campus safety concern that disrupted the group for 15 minutes. The students were stopped mid conversation and asked to wait until it was safe to return back to the

focus groups. The students may have given rich data through their conversations while I was not in the room recording. In addition, stopping the conversation abruptly could have impeded the flow of thought for the students. The second nonequivalence concern resulted from the surveys not being linked to specific students. Thus, I was unable to conduct a comparative analysis from the presurvey and postsurvey for specific students.

There were more students who took the pre survey than the post survey possibly as a result of survey fatigue. Mortality occurs when students drop out of the study (Smith & Glass, 1987). Many surveys are deployed at the end of the semester and the focus on taking finals could be an additional reason. In addition to the survey mortality, the focus groups reflected attrition. There were more than 30 students who indicated their intent to participate in the focus groups; however, only eight of the 30 students came to the actual focus groups.

Novelty effect and history challenges (Smith & Glass, 1987) possibly worked together to influence the study. Novelty effect occurs when the newness of a variable can influence how it is received or used (Smith & Glass, 1987). The program was new and therefore and could bring excitement that is only motivated by the newness of it. The program was the first of its kind at the college. Juniors and seniors did not have the expectation of year-specific programs as the college mainly focuses on the first-year experience. The uptick in responses for the initial survey could be predicated on the new attention to their academic class, the novelty effect. The response could be the students expressing their feeling based on the new found attention to their class by the college.

Coupled with novelty effect, the threat of history is based on outside influences that are not intentionally designed within the study (Smith & Glass, 1987). The students

expressed in the focus group that they were influenced by their predecessors, the previous classes who modeled disengagement for them. It appeared as if the students used this as a form of expectation to disengage. While historical threats to validity are outside occurrences not associated with the study but happen within the time frame of the study, there is something to be said about the instability of the staffing at the college. The current seniors have encountered three associate deans since enrolling as honors students. Many of them have had two to three different academic advisors since beginning and there have been other key staff turn overs in the small staff of six that serve the DPC honors students. While not all of the changes occurred during the course of the study, there could be indirect effects such as students seeing the previous disengagement of classes that have come before based on the lack of instability within the college.

Lessons Learned

Moving forward, two factors need to be addressed and considered for future studies and the program in general. The first is the small number of participants. It is difficult to generalize the findings of the study based on small number of juniors and seniors who engaged with the innovation. With the eight students who participated in the focus group, only four attended the workshops in person and one interacted with the information via email. In order to truly gain insight on the studies' population, a larger population size of students who interact or attend is needed. If the program continues with a stronger attendance rate, relaunching the study may provide more information that can be adapted and scaled.

The second lesson is the importance of having clear and directed marketing. The initial study planned for specific marketing and strategic timing of the marketing

materials that did not present as planned. The marketing materials were designed by newly hired design students. The first disseminated marketing materials that misrepresented the content of the first workshop. The compellation fliers did not have the correct logistical information such as time, date, and location. In an effort to assist, the document was sent to the full population prior to my validation of information. Thus, a retraction email and corrected marketing materials were sent out to students. It may have caused confusion and presented a hurdle to being inundated with information. In the future, all marketing will be handled by the student services office.

Implications for Practice

The Life Hacks program innovation was neither success nor a failure by statistical measures. This finding draws the conclusion there is more work to be done in the area of assisting juniors and seniors in creating successful transition to life after graduation. Student Services, as a department, is more about the process of getting students to resources than the actual acts of service. The department typically helps students navigate processes to academic resources. Assisting students is an opportunity to engage student in critical thinking through the opportunities provided. Many of the students within this study vocalized the need for such programming that addresses their current and future needs. It appears as though they needed help connecting the dots from one transition to the other. There are two major implications based on the literature and the data presented.

Access

The need for increased access is the first major implication for practice from this study. Student indicated that because of the timing of the events they needed more

creative access to the events. If there is programming for juniors and seniors specifically, having more than one way to access the information is key to having them engage with the information. One of the students suggested live-streaming the workshops so that students who are at work or unable to attend can be "present" With social media platforms increasing the relay of information at faster rates than traditional newsletters, it is imperative that it be utilized to connect students to events a programs beyond registration and marketing. I suggest utilizing social media's ability to live stream that allows students to ask questions in real time. I think this will garner more attention from students who are available but unable to attend and it will provide access to the materials after the event. Most universities and colleges have the ability to utilize a classroom management tool such as Blackboard or Canvas. Tools such as this can create and organized space to hold documents and resources from events and activities. Students can interact with the information at their leisure. In addition, providing access for students to resource materials to utilize may increase their ability to cope with transition by expanding available resources.

Resources are important but if students do not know they have access and why it would benefit them, the motivation to exercise their ability to access the information would be limited. This means strategic marketing is important to help students understand their access to information. Based on the data, the importance of relationships not only exists for support but also for marketing. During the focus groups, students indicated that having resources relayed by individuals closer to their age group and students who have recently experienced the topic helped them to receive and retain the information. The students felt more comfortable asking questions and dissecting

topics with their former peers. They need to understand why the information is important and how it connects to their future but from someone who is at the end of the emerging adulthood spectrum or just entering adulthood, at age 25. When asked if the peer relay of information about the workshops increased their desire to attend, the overwhelming majority agreed citing one additional change. Based on this study, the motivation for transition, and the emotions it can evoke, can trigger an action by the student. Students in the study in distress sought out support and utilized the support, in this case, the staff, to find a plan of action, the fourth sector of the 4s coping system (Schlossberg, 1981): strategies.

For programs or colleges that promote interdisciplinary studies, finding a way to have the students reconnect with one another through year-specific programming may be beneficial. As students spoke about connecting and building relationships with their peers the first year of school, once they became embedded into their respective academic programs, they encountered less of one another. A student spoke about not seeing a member of their close first-year friend group until two years later at their thesis defense. No falling out had occurred, just the constraints of time, academics and change in living quarters had eroded the visibility of their relationship. More year-specific programming that is generalized enough to speak to the needs of the mass population can increase the opportunity for students of various disciplines to continue the relationships built previously such as freshman year.

Kuh (1998), spoke to the importance of cultural events as they help students navigate transitions in an orderly fashion. While Kuh spoke directly to building traditions such as senior week as a rites of passage, I call for the process to begin earlier

than senior year. Introducing the topic of graduation and life after should begin junior year. Students are beginning to make preparations for what comes next during this time period. Creating a ritual that encourages students to engage and connect to the transition will help them develop the skills to better cope with the impending transitions.

Experiences

Gone are the days that students will sit quietly and absorb the information given to them. Student participants want to experience and engage. The theory of involvement speaks to a need for physical and psychosocial energy from the student to participate in their learning. The students in the study talked about seeing too many presentations that did not involve both a deposit and a withdrawal of information. A student indicated that they get "talked at" in class but instead would like to find ways to relate the information taught to their current life and situation, an applied practice of information. If engagement is on the table for juniors and seniors, it needs to be worth their time and they need to walk away having exerted both physical and mental energy together and not independent of one another. For example, students learning about nutrition may need to prepare a meal in under 30 minutes and then have the conversation that connects the meal to nutrition and budgeting. Students need to hear the information and connect it to a direct action in order to see the value in giving their time to a program.

Local Implications

On a more local level, this study has impacted our current design of the Life Hacks workshops. The department has already been able to make small changes to impact the current semester's (at the time of writing) programs. The first change has been to who is designing and promoting the workshops. We hired a current senior to

designate the topics and to find resources/presenters who can adequately speak to the subject while still relating to the students where they currently are in life. Surprisingly the overarching themes that the senior student chose are similar to what was launched in the fall of this academic year. The change has been the types of presenters (now called topic experts) and how the information is presented, as I describe below.

The second major change to the program was a change in location and aesthetics. The original workshops were held in available classrooms that lend to large lectures. The workshops are now held in the lobby of the suite. The new student worker responsible for programming the Life Hacks suggested that we create an atmosphere that invites conversation. This was done by purchasing large two to three person bean bag chairs, floor cushions, pillows, and floor lamps. The students have begun to call it the "Life Hacks Lounge." The topic experts join the students on the floor or in the bean bags for a conversation instead of a presentation. Floor lamps are used to dim the harsh lights of the fluorescent overhead lights in the honors college suite. To date, there have been three Life Hacks workshops with these new changes and the attendance has increased from an average of three juniors and seniors to 15 juniors and seniors per workshop. Many of the students who have attended mentioned they heard about the workshops from a peer.

Implications for Research

In order to better understand junior and senior honors student engagement further research is needed that can be generalized and scaled accordingly. This study's survey briefly spoke to intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for students attending events but it is important to know what is more likely to have a student seek out specific resources. If

there is a clearer understanding of how students utilize resource, it can directly impact how we provide access to the resources.

A longitudinal study of the implications of the Life Hacks series would be my next step to further examine how year-specific programming can influence their engagement. Utilizing a transition such as graduation has received interest from current students but knowing how students relate to transitions will help colleges and universities program in a way that encourages students to plan to cope with future changes. If the study is successful, in terms that results can be generalized, universities and colleges may see the benefit of investing in life skills training possibly through centers or programs of their own.

Conclusion

This actions research study was designed to examine the lack of participation and involvement from junior and senior level honors students. This study took place on the second largest campus of BHC. Based on this study, it can be seen that the junior and senior participants allowed their emotions to influence their ability to cope with transition. The impact of their emotions dictated their point of view of adulthood and shifted them on the pendulum, either closer or away from what they consider an adult.

As discussed, relationships are important to the decision making process and the building of a support network for the participants. The lack of, and in some cases, existing relationships activated students' emotions. The participants indicated that they are not considering the evolution of relationships.

The results of this study also indicate that the junior and senior participants have expectations of the honors college to be a skill builder, provide unique opportunities, and

a community in which they can identify as a member. Adulthood for many of the participants aligned with the theoretical framework of emerging adulthood. The participants indicated that independence, both financially and through decision making, is a key component of being an adult.

The implications of this research included increasing access to the information to the student population by using media sources they are currently utilizing. In addition, it is evident that peer marketing is important in helping participants to understand the importance of a project or workshop. As many honors programs are interdisciplinary, finding ways for juniors and seniors to reconnect with those they begun the honors program or college with will be important to maintaining relationships. Based on participants' feedback, students may want to attend programs that are more of a unique experience that requires physical or mental focus. This study suggests that additional research should be done within honors programs and student within their junior and senior years.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Appendix A

Dear Student:

My name is Kira Gatewood and I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU). I am working under the direction of Dr. Lauren Harris, a faculty member in MLFTC. We are conducting a research study exploring the junior and senior student engagement within the honors college. The purpose of this study is to better understand your perception of your preparedness to cope with transitions such as graduation.

You were selected as a possible participant because you are a current honors student enrolled as a junior or a senior. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The purpose of the study is to explore how the creation of individual year-specific programming can impact a student's desire to engage with the honors college and if programming can influence a student perception of their preparedness for transitions. Ultimately, this research may be used a published paper and presented at conferences.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:
  - Take two surveys on your engagement within the college (10 minutes per survey)
  - Attend a minimum of three (3) or none of the "Life Hack" programs provided by the college in the fall of 2018
  - You may opt into participate in a focus groups to discuss your experience in the program or why you chose not to participate (1 hour)

There are no reasonable foreseeable (or expected) risks. There may be unknown risks. The benefits of participation are the ability to provide feedback to the college and the ability to form or shape the junior and senior programming.

The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. The focus groups will be audio recorded and transcribed. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

You may receive the following payment: After each event, participants in the study will be entered into a drawing to win a $10 Starbucks gift card.

The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with the investigators of this study or the honors college. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Kira Gatewood at kira.gatewood@asu.edu or by telephone at 602.496.1296. If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigators, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.
If you have any problems or concerns that occur as a result of your participation, you can report them to the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at (480) 965-6788.

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

Subject's Name (print): _____

Subject's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B

PRESURVEY AND POSTSURVEYS

Appendix B

Presurvey and Postsurvey

The goal of this survey is to better understand the motivation of junior and senior engagement within Barrett and your perception of your ability to cope with transitions. It is best to give the first response that enters your mind rather than dwelling on each statement and thinking about it over and over.

For each question in this section, please circle the number that best indicates how true the statement is to you. (1=not true; 2=rarely; 3=sometimes; 4=often; 5=true)

Extrinsic Motivation: This concept refers to motivations that are by an external factor (money, trophies, gifts, etc.)

1. I am looking forward to graduating from Barrett because of the honors certificate.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

2. I have gained skills from Barrett events/programs that will aid in my ability to obtain employment after graduation.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

3. I feel Barrett events/programs assisted in developing skills I will use after graduation.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

4. I am more motivated to attend Barrett events/programs when my friends are going.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

5. I am more likely to attend Barrett events/programs when there is food.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

6. I am more likely to attend Barrett events/programs if there are free promotional items or giveaways.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

Intrinsic Motivation: This concept refers to motivations that influenced by internal factors. (values, goals, beliefs)

7. I believe attending Barrett events/programs are an important part of the Barrett experience.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

8. I feel the current Barrett events/programs are of value to my professional development.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

9. I believe arts and culture events/programming are useful.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

10. I believe professional development events/programs are a value add to my Barrett experience.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

11. I find attending global engagement Barrett events/programs valuable.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

Coping: This concept is focused on ability to cope with transition.

12. When situations arise, I feel confident in my ability to assess the situation.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

13. When things go wrong, I feel I have the skills to navigate the challenge.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

14. I can clearly identify my needs.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

15. I feel confident in my ability to develop an action plan to achieve my goals.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

16. When situations arise, I can readily find resources to assist me.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

17. When faced with challenges, I focus on the things I can control.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

18. I feel I have gained skills from college programming to assist me in coping with change.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

<u>Transition:</u> This concept is related to graduation as a transition.

19. I feel prepared for graduation.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

20. I have a sense of direction for my life after graduation.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

21. I feel I will be successful after college.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

22. I have a network of support that will extend beyond graduation.

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

23. I feel I am gaining enough skills in college to become a successful at "adulting".

5	4	3	2	1
(true)	(often)	(sometimes)	(rarely)	(not true)

Optional Demographics:
In this section, you may choose to provide additional demographic information to assist with the research. Please note this information is voluntary.

Current Academic Level:
- o Junior
- o Senior

Enter your current age: _____

Gender:
- o Female
- o Male
- o Non-binary
- o Opt out

Housing: *I live…*
- o On Camps in the Residential College
- o Within 15 mins of the campus
- o Within 16-30 minutes of the campus
- o Over 30 minutes from the campus

Please select your major college:

- o College of Public Service and Community Solutions
- o College of Nursing and Health Innovation

- College of Health Solutions
- College of Integrative Sciences and Arts
- Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Thank you for taking your time to aid in this research. If you have any questions or concerns, please email Kira.gatewood@asu.edu. If you wish to participate in the focus group, please click here to complete the form.

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Appendix C

Focus Group Protocol

I. Introduction: Stating the purpose of the study and tanking everyone for their time. Ask if everyone is okay with audio recording.
   a. Ask Participants to go around and introduce themselves to include:
      i. Name
      ii. Year (junior or senior)
      iii. Major
      iv. Age

II. General Attitudes about the role of college-
   a. Please describe the purpose of college is to you, include inside and outside of the class room experiences.
      i. Has this view changed from the previous focus group meetings?
   b. What do you value the most about your honors college experience? Why? Please give an example.
      i. Has this view changed from the previous focus group meetings?

III. Perceptions of Preparedness for coping with transitions: Please reflect and think about a time in college when you had a transition. (anticipated or unanticipated)
   a. Tell me why or why not you felt prepared or not
      i. What type of support do you feel you need to feel prepared?
      ii. Has this view changed from the previous focus group meetings?
   b. Tell me about what you are doing in preparation of graduation?
      i. Do you have a graduation plan? Please explain.
      ii. Has this view changed from the previous focus group meetings?
   c. Has Barrett prepared you for graduation? How well?
      i. Tell me about your experience in the Life Hack Seminars now that they have concluded. Overall, did you learn something useful for your transition to graduation? Why or why not?

IV. Emerging Adulthood
   a. What constitutes adulthood?
      i. What does the preparation process look like to becoming an adult?
      ii. Has this view changed from the previous focus group meetings? Why?

   b. Do you feel you are an adult? Why or Why not?
      i. Are you feeling closer or further away from being an adult and why?
      ii. Has this view changed from the previous focus group meetings?

c. What skills do you think you need to become an adult?
    i. Where/How do you learn these skills?
    ii. Is someone/thing responsible for teaching these skills?
    iii. Has this view changed from the previous focus group meetings?

d. Do you see these skills in yourself? Why or Why not?
    i. Has this view changed from the previous focus group meetings?

V. Wrap up: Any final comments? Thank you for participating.